

Hymns: 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 3 Amazing Grace

Scripture: Psalm 106:1-6; 28-31; 47-48

Big idea: Life Report

Our scripture text for today is: **Joshua 23**

Activity report – that’s what IBM called it back in 1972. Monthly, we would document accomplishments, activities, and future plans. Over the years, I became very adept at writing those reports and then using them to summarize my year for the annual performance evaluation. But after about 20 years, big changes were going on. IBM shifted to Six-Sigma continuous process improvement reports. Six Sigma refers to six standard deviations from the mean of a bell curve and equals one in 3.4 million – nearly perfect. While this made some sense in the manufacturing world, that kind of goal setting and bean counting didn’t really fit development. After about eight years of beating that dead horse, IBM shifted from individual focus to a team emphasis – another disaster. Although activity reports were not required, I still submitted them monthly until retiring fifteen years ago.

Last time in our in the book of Joshua, we looked at the way of Balaam, who advised King Balak to entice the Israelites to follow the false gods of the Moabites and practice immorality in order to make Israelites forfeit God’s blessing and bring God’s judgment upon them. Today, we’re going to look at God’s promised blessing and judgment based on the activities of the Israelites and the final activity report for Joshua found in Joshua chapter 23.

Joshua 23

Setting – you may recall they were camped in Shiloh about twenty miles north of Jerusalem. Then in verse one, we learn the time:

*[1] And it came to pass **a long time after** ... the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about,*

that Joshua wa[s] old and stricken in age.

Exactly when did the LORD give rest to Israel from all outside foes? When he defeated the kings of Canaan. We previously learned that Joshua likely was 60 years old when he took over his leadership role from Moses and began the campaign to take the Promised Land. His age helps us follow the timeline. From Acts 13:20 we can calculate Joshua took about ten years to give Israel this rest. That made Joshua 70 years old at that time. We also know that Joshua lived 110 years (Joshua 24:31). Since by this time, Joshua is old and stricken in age, and he says he is about to die (23:11), Israel rested for forty years – which is **a long time**. Also note an interesting symmetry here. Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years, went to war for ten years, and then had forty years of peace.

*[2] And Joshua called for all Israel,
and for their elders,
and for their heads,
and for their judges,
and for their officers,
and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:*

God's accomplishments:

[3] And y[ou] have seen all that the LORD your God ha[s] done []to all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he that ... fought for you.

Joshua's accomplishments:

*[4] Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes,
from Jordan,*

That is the Jordan river.

*with all the nations that I have cut off,
even unto the great sea westward.*

The great sea refers to the Mediterranean. As we learned, those two bodies of water define the extent of the Promised Land.

God's promised actions:

[5] And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and y[ou] shall possess their land, as the LORD your God ha[s] promised ... you.

Joshua's exhortations:

[6] Be ... therefore very courageous

That's an interesting word choice as it is the same as Joshua used when he first defined the mission to take the Promised Land. He said four times in Joshua chapter 1, "be strong and of a good courage."

*to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses,
that y[ou] turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;*

*[7] That y[ou] come not among these nations ... that remain among you;
neither ... mention ... the name of their gods,
nor ... swear by them, neither serve them,
nor bow yourselves [down]to them:*

Why? Because as we learned last time, that would force God to drive them from the land.

[8] But cleave unto the LORD your God, as y[ou] have done unto this day.

[9] For the LORD ha[s] driven out from before you great and strong [nations]: but as for you, no man ha[s] been able to stand before you unto this day.

[10] One man of you shall chase a thousand:

for the LORD your God, he it is that fight[s] for you, as he ha[s] promised you.

[11] Take good heed therefore ..., that y[ou] love the LORD your God.

Joshua's warnings:

*[12] Else if y[ou] ... in any wise go back,
and cleave unto the remnant of these nations,
even these that remain among you,
and shall make marriages with them,
and go in unto them, and they to you:*

[13] Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps []to you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until y[ou] perish from ... this good land which the LORD your God ha[s] given you.

If you think about it, Israel suffers daily from this very thing as the country is sliced up to provide "Palestinian" (Canaanite) areas:

- Gaza Strip
- West Bank
- Temple Mount

These are flash points where serious conflicts occur to this day between the Israelites and the people the Israelites failed to drive from the land. As we can see, this verse is certainly pertinent to this very day.

Joshua reiterates God's faithfulness:

[14] And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth:

In other words, he's about to die.

and y[ou] know

in all your hearts

and in all your souls,

that not one thing ha[s] failed of all the good things which the LORD your God sp[o]ke

*concerning you;
all are come to pass unto you,
and not one thing ha[s] failed*

Joshua then prophesied that Israel will be driven out:

*[15] Therefore it shall come to pass,
that as all **good** things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you;
so shall the LORD bring upon you all **evil** things,
until he ha[s] **destroyed** you from ... this **good** land which the LORD your God ha[s] given you.
[16] When y[ou] have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God,
which he commanded you,
and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them;
then shall the **anger** of the LORD be **kindled** against you,
and y[ou] shall **perish quickly** from ... the **good** land which he ha[s] given ... you.*

Think about what he's saying. He knew while he fought so long and hard to win the Promised Land for his people, that they would shortly thereafter lose that land due to their choice to turn from God. But exactly how did Joshua know this?

Moses prophesied it (Deuteronomy 4:25-28), and God said it directly to Moses (Deuteronomy 31:14-20). In both cases, Joshua was **present to hear** these prophesies. We only have time to take a look at the second of these passages:

Deuteronomy 31

*[14] And **the LORD said** unto Moses, Behold, [your] days approach that [y]ou must die: call **Joshua**, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge.*

that is, transfer leadership of Israel from Moses to Joshua.

*And Moses **and Joshua** went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.*

[15] And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud:

You may recall the LORD led the Israelites in the wilderness with this *pillar of cloud*.

and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

*[16] And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, [y]ou shal[l] sleep with [your] fathers; and this people will **rise up**, and go **a whoring** after the gods of the strangers of the land,*

Those *strangers* refer to the Canaanites.

*[wherever] they go to be among them, and will **forsake** me, and **break** my covenant which I have made with them.*

*[17] Then my anger shall be **kindled** against them in that day, and I will **forsake** them, and I will **hide** my face from them, and they shall be **devoured**, and many **evils** and **troubles** shall befall them; so that they will say in that day. Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?*

*[18] And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are **turned** unto other gods.*

[19] Now therefore write ... this song for you,

and teach it [to] the children of Israel:

put it in their mouths,

*that this song may be a **witness** for me against the children of Israel.*

[20] For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore unto their fathers, that flow[s] with milk and honey;

and they shall have eaten and filled themselves,

and [become] fat;

***then** will they **turn** unto other gods,*

*and **serve** them, and **provoke** me,*

*and **break** my covenant.*

That's been a common theme through the ages. When the people of God in a land prosper for a prolonged time, they risk turning from God to serve their own evil desires – which predictably brings their nation to ruin. Sadly, we're witnessing that theme play out in our own country today.

Application

We started today considering activity reports. We proceeded through Joshua's report. We recounted God's promise to bless or curse based on whether or not the Israelites followed Him or turned from Him. The apostle Paul writes on Israel's plight:

[22] Behold therefore the **goodness** and **severity** of God: on them which fell,

the Israelites

severity;

but toward thee,

Gentile believers in Jesus Christ

goodness, if [y]ou continue in his goodness: otherwise [y]ou also shal[1] be cut off.

But these judgments involve nations. What about individuals? Will God judge individuals?

Romans 2

[2] But we are sure that **the judgment of God is according to truth** against them which commit [evil].

While we who know the LORD

were vexed the entire month of June

with the **celebration** of perversion sanctioned by our government,

we can rest assured that those supporting and pushing this will face the sure wrath of God. Still we need to be careful not have a judgmental spirit toward others knowing we too will face our Maker.

[3] And thinkest thou this, O man, that judges[] [others] ... that [y]ou shal[1] **escape the judgment of God?**

The answer of course is, “No, we shall not escape the judgment of God.”

[5] But after [your] hard[] and impenitent heart [you] treasure[] up []to [your]self **wrath** against the day of **wrath** and revelation of **the righteous judgment of God**;

So what exactly will the judgment of Christians involve?

II Corinthians 5

*[10] For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**;*

This is the *bema seat* for giving rewards.

*that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to **that he ha[s] done**, whether it be good or bad.*

Will Christians be judged for their sins? No. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. He has given those who have accepted His free gift of grace His righteousness (Romans 3:25-26; Hebrews 10:10; I John 1:7b); . So what will we be judged for? The answer: our works but **not** our sins.

I Corinthians 3

[13] Every man's work shall be made [known]: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

[14] If any man's work abide which he ha[s] built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

[15] If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

You may have heard a Bible teacher quip that some in heaven will smell like smoke. This is where they got that idea – of course that's just a joke.

But what happens to unbelievers? Will they face a judgment? Yes. But because they rejected Jesus Christ, they face a big problem. They **will** be judged for their sins **and found guilty** (Romans 3:23). The Apostle John describes this somber judgment in Revelation chapter 20:

Revelation 20

[11] And I saw a great white throne,

You likely have heard of the *great white throne judgment*.

and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them [referring to unbelievers].

[12] And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and

*another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works.***

*[13] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man **according to their works.***

[14] And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

[15] And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Indeed that's not a pretty picture for them.

The Bible also speaks of sowing and reaping. In Galatians 6:7b we read:

...whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

We've had a nice vegetable garden this year. It produced leafy greens, strawberries, squash, melons, cucumbers, herbs and garnishes, peppers, green beans, eggplant, lots of tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, sunflowers, and of course those ever-present weeds and insect pests. If we sow beans, we get beans. If we sow tomatoes, we get tomatoes. If we sow broccoli, we will not get corn, we will get broccoli and swarms of ravenous insects that love to eat the leaves.

So too it is in life. If we sow to the spirit we will reap the fruit of the spirit, if we sow to the flesh we will reap corruption (v. 8). Yet, so often we turn from the LORD, as did Israel, and reap the corruption of our own deeds.

During Abraham's famous incident of bargaining with the LORD over lives in Sodom, he asks the following question:

Genesis 18

[25] That be far from thee ...,

to slay the righteous with the wicked:

and that the righteous should be [treated] as the wicked,

that be far from thee:

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Indeed, as we read the LORD is a righteous judge, and we certainly could use a few more righteous judges these days. Despite how His ways may seem harsh at times, we know they are always good and right. The Israelites have faced serious judgment in this world. The latest was their horrendous persecution (the holocaust) at the hands of Adolph Hitler.

We can be thankful that though we too deserve the wrath of God, Jesus Christ paid the price in full for our sins to set us free.

Benediction

*The LORD bless thee, and **keep** thee:*

*The LORD make his face **shine** upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:*

The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

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