

Joshua 24:19-28 | Dave Stough

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[0 : 0 0] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. There's a couple of them. One of them is, it's important, it's emphasized over and over again, it's very important to personally remember what God has done in our lives already, so we don't forget about Him.

And then another big lesson is, He wants us to learn how to let Him fight our battles for us. He wants us to be in the right battle, and He wants us to learn how to trust Him to do battle for us. So take heart, don't fear, just show up and let Him work through you.

That's one of the other big ones I got out of this. And in the times that we're living in now, it's been very appropriate for me. We are going through unprecedented times in our culture here in America, and it becomes more and more apparent to me for the need for this dying world around us to hear the life-giving message of Jesus Christ.

It seems like the battle isn't intensifying, isn't it? I know it is in my workplace, and I think many of you have said that. I can say for sure that Bob would say that too, right?

[1 : 3 0] But I also think the opportunities are growing also. So I pray that today's text, rightly understood and applied, would encourage us to share the gospel, the good news that Christ wants to save sinners.

Good, that's up. So in our passage today, Israel's gathered at Shechem, and they're here to hear Joshua one last time before he dies.

And Joshua is reminding them what God has done for them, and he has like a warning tone here. Let's just go ahead and read this passage.

So Joshua warned the people, you are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy and jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.

If you abandon the Lord and serve other gods, he will turn against you and destroy you, even though he has been so good to you. But the people answered Joshua, no, we will serve the Lord.

[2 : 3 5] You are witnesses to your own decision, Joshua said. You have chosen to serve the Lord. Yes, they replied, we are witnesses to what we have said. All right then, Joshua said, destroy the idols among you and turn your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.

The people said to Joshua, we will serve the Lord our God. We will obey him alone. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day at Shechem, committing them to follow the decrees and regulations of the Lord.

Joshua recorded these things in the book of God's instructions. As a reminder of their agreement, he took a huge stone and rolled it beneath the terril tree beside the tabernacle of the Lord. Joshua said to all the people, this stone has heard everything the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God.

Then Joshua sent all the people away to their own homelands. Last week, Jeffrey gave an encouraging message that emphasized the need for us to fear the Lord and to get rid of the stubbornness in our own hearts that keeps us from loving the Lord.

[3 : 5 2] I found it interesting, excuse me, I found it interesting that even in the Old Testament book of Leviticus, I think he pointed out in chapter 10, God was telling Israel back then that you can't serve me out of duty.

It has to be from your heart. And so, really, we know all through the Bible, you cannot serve God unless you love him. Sorry.

So, as I prepared for this message, and when I read this text, it quickly became apparent to me for the need to distinguish between the Old and New Covenants.

This conversation Joshua had with the people there is a testimony to how difficult it is to follow the law of God.

The law is demanding and has curses for not obeying. Joshua had lived through the times.

Remember, he was there at Mount Sinai when God gave the Ten Commandments, and the people said, all that the Lord said we will do.

[5 : 09] He heard that, and he came down from the mountain with Moses only to find, you know, the whole, most of the nation, I guess, committing idolatry and all kinds of immorality.

Out there in the desert around the Golden Calf. So, the purpose of this conversation that Joshua had with the people in our text was to show them their need to get rid of, if there's idols, to get rid of them, to purify themselves and give their hearts to the Lord.

They needed this kind of heart to keep that covenant. So, Joshua warned the people of some pretty serious statements here, did he not? I mean, look at verse 19.

Holy smokes. You're not able to serve the Lord. He's a holy and jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. Verse 20.

If you abandon the Lord and serve other gods, he will turn against you and destroy you, even though he has been so good to you. Wow. That almost sounds foreign to us, doesn't it?

[6 : 16] Did Joshua's warnings work? Well, history bears out his statement there at the beginning, you're not able to serve the Lord. You just got to turn your Bible to the first chapter of the book of Judges and you see it right there.

Those statements made up there, they sound like God's going to get you, right, instead of save you, don't they?

He will not forgive you. Wow. So did God change? Well, no.

We know that God did not change. He cannot change. However, the covenant with which he relates to his people has changed. So Joshua is here relating the holiness and the jealousy of God to people under the old covenant.

Now, the holiness and the jealousy of God, those attributes, he's still the same. Those haven't changed. So he's still absolutely holy and he is rightfully jealous for his own children to be loyal to him.

[7 : 32] So this is not like a selfish jealousy like we can have. This is a righteous God wanting something that's rightfully his, right? A heart that loves him. That's what he created us for.

So God's commands for holiness, even though there's a different covenant here, they're not just found there. They're also found in the New Testament to us, 1 Peter.

Be holy, for I am holy. But we have something more glorious than the law that enables us to live for the Lord. Now, so Joshua did what was expected, though, in that passage under the old covenant. So the law of God does show us what is right, but as we know here, I hear it said a lot in this place, the law doesn't give us any power to live a godly life.

Under the law, fear and obligation are used. The words of Joshua here in our text are an example of that. Now, keep in mind, it's not the law, or is it Joshua that are the failure.

[8 : 41] The law is perfect, and it shows us the character of the lawgiver, right? The issue was, and is, the heart of the ones keeping the law. Look at what the Lord says.

You want to switch those passages in Jeremiah? Look at what he says in Jeremiah 17 to us about the condition of our hearts. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, with a point of a diamond engraved on the tablet of their heart.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. I test the mind.

At the core of our fallen human nature is this propensity for us to justify our corrupt behavior. Well, why is that?

Well, I say, you know, we got this sin nature from our forefathers, and it's so depraved that it even has a hard time admitting that it is depraved.

[9 : 52] And, I mean, that's just how corrupt, without God, we are. So, as an illustration, we had, Gene and I had our grandchildren over this last Saturday.

Leigh was now two and a half years old, and she's talking pretty good. She picked up a golf ball and stuck it in her mouth. So, she was pretty close to Gene, and out of fear that she could choke, Gene said, Get that out of your mouth, Leigh.

[16:30] The sins we regretfully commit after we get saved. That whole mountain is taken away by the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus says in Matthew 26, When he took the cup, he said, This is the covenant of the, This is the new covenant in my blood, Which is shed for the remission of sins.

So the Father's fully satisfied with the Son's sacrifice. The sin issue is dealt with in God's mind. Second thing you can say about the new covenant, Is God is now free to reside inside of those who have trusted Jesus Christ.

The law that was a curse to us, Has now become, actually become a part of our being. I will put my law in their minds, And on their hearts I will write it.

What we once thought as drudgery to keep, We look at differently now, Because the Holy Spirit has given life to us, And we delight in the law.

Our new nature delights in it. And the third thing you can say about this new covenant, Is that we actually know God. Have you ever been talking, Trying to witness to somebody, And they, Got their minds kind of made up, And they say, Well, You never know where you're going after you die.

[18:04] Well, that's because they don't know, The one that has power over life and death. Jesus said in John 17, This is eternal life, That they may know you, The only true God in Jesus Christ, When you have sin.

So the new covenant enables us to love God, Because it's reconciled us to him. I think we need to, Like, Meditate and ponder on that.

We're reconciled to God. It's given us a new nature, To please him, And provides continual power to us, Because of the Holy Spirit, When we walk by faith.

So, The new covenant does away, With much of the old. No longer is a temple needed. We are God's temple. He lives inside of us. We no longer bring, Bloody animal sacrifices.

Jesus shed his own blood, And he entered the most holy place, To purchase eternal redemption for us. He did that, One time, For those of us who believe the gospel.

[19:13] We no longer need an earthly priest. We have a high priest, Jesus, Jesus, The son of God, Who has went through the heavens, And has sat down, At the right hand of the Father, And he ever lives, To make intercession for us.

These are all ours right now, In the age of grace we live in. As Romans 8 says, Nothing shall ever separate us, From the love of God, Which is found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So I want to ask you today, I don't think it's ever out of line, To ask people this. Do you personally know him? For those of us who do, Living by God's grace, Through faith, Is sometimes hard though, Isn't it?

I sometimes feel that way. I actually often times feel that way. It takes an acknowledgement, That we have nothing to offer God, Except faith.

I'm going to say that again. It takes an acknowledgement, On our part, To admit that we have nothing, To offer God, Except faith. Colossians 2, This is one of my favorite verses, In the last couple years.

[20:37] Says, Just as you have received, Christ Jesus the Lord, So walk in him, By faith. So do we disregard, The ten commandments, The moral portion of the law?

As believers, The law does have, A certain role in our lives. It points to God's holiness. When evangelizing, We use it as the first point, Of the gospel.

To help people see, What God is saying, And to help them put their faith, In what Christ did alone. Without law, Without the law, You cannot see sin, The way God does.

So not only do the commandments, Tell us the will of God, They also tell us, Who God is. When you look beyond, The commandments, You see the God, The character, Of the God who gave them.

The same God who says, Thou shalt not bear, False witness, Jesus himself, Can never, Does never, And can never, Bear false witness. The God who said, Honor your father and mother, Did himself, When he was here, In the person of Jesus Christ, And his earth, Always, Honor his father and mother.

[22:03] When the law, Was given at Mount Sinai, It emanated, From the very character of God, The same God, We know by grace, Right now. So to dismiss, The moral portion, Of the law, To dismiss it, Is to dismiss, God himself.

His grace is not divorced, From his character. So to talk about, The grace and forgiveness of God, Without first, Understanding, I'm not saying you live, By the law, But without first, Understanding, The holiness, And righteous judgment, Of God, Is to mischaracterize, The gospel, We were saved

by, And it's the same gospel, That we're sanctified by.
When it comes to, Law and grace, I see two problems, In the American churches today. And I think,
The world sees these two, And it keeps them, From coming, To the Lord.
Now, Both of these errors, Attack the gospel. I believe, These, Both of these, Problems, Keep the
church, From living, And speaking, The gospel, Properly, To the unsaved world.
And the exaltation of man, Is at the core, Of each of the problems. And the crazy thing about it, Is if
you had a proper understanding, Of the law, They wouldn't be there.
[23 : 42] The first one, Is a license to sin. You cannot understand, God's grace, Without first
understanding, God's holiness. I'm going to repeat that.

You cannot, Understand God's grace, Without first understanding, His holiness. The second one, Is
legalism. We talk about that a lot here.

You cannot live, By God's grace, If you want to follow, Some kind of checklist, To be right with him.
I'm going to repeat that. You cannot live, By God's grace, If you want to follow, Some kind of
checklist, To be right with him.

So the first one, Let's talk about that. The church at large, In America today, Is in a sad state of
affairs, Wouldn't you think? It's a growing issue, Not regarding God's character, His holiness.
The message of the cross, Is changed, And it's perverted, Because of a disregard, For his righteous
character, As seen in the law. Even that statement, I made earlier, You have nothing to offer God,
But faith.

[24 : 57] Even that's misconstrued, And perverted, To fit the, The self-exaltation of man. If people
use it for greed, In the teaching of the prosperity gospel, Faith is a power you possess, Not a gift of
God.

Therefore, If you don't have health and wealth, You don't have enough faith. The whole focus is
wrong, right? You guys know that. It's idolatry to seek money this way.

It's exalted above God. Also, Faith is not a power you possess. Faith is simply, Placing your hope
and confidence, In God. And leaving the results to Him.

Entrusting Him, And loving Him above all else. It is only the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, That meets
the deepest need, Of a human heart.

Not money. So even the phrase, You have nothing to offer God, Except faith. Even that's perverted
today. Now, It's not just the name it and claim it groups, That do it.

[26 : 07] I believe it's also, Other churches that are afraid of offending people. Andy Stanley says,
We need to unhitch, The Old Testament from the new.

Like they're somehow incompatible. My goodness. When we get saved, We know, What we need to
be saved from.

When we grow in the grace of God, We grow in holiness. Those who pervert the gospel, By
disregarding the holiness of God, Send themselves and others, On a path of destruction.

You definitely have to question, The heart, The salvation. Is it our place to judge, Is somebody
saved? No. But you have to question it. Paul even said, Himself in 2 Corinthians 13, 5, Examine
yourself, As to whether you're in the faith.

He said that to people in the church. So when it comes to relating to the law of God, That is one
side of the problem today. The other side, Legalism. You cannot live by God's grace, Excuse me.

[27 : 15] You cannot live by God's grace, If you want to follow some kind of checklist, To be right
with Him. Even as believers in the gospel message, We still have to learn, That our fallen human
nature, Has nothing to offer God.

When man-made lists are used for guides, To holiness, That changed heart that God gave you,
That's taken out of the picture. That's why it doesn't work.

When you're following that, The heart is out. So fulfilling a list of obligations, Doesn't motivate a
believer, To love God. My goodness, Joshua gave them the perfect law of God, And it did not
produce righteousness.

Why would a set of man-made rules, Produce righteousness, In us. What kind of pride says, I can
keep the law?

Any kind of law. Do you not hear what the law is saying? Now some people, When they hear, No
rules, No law, They automatically assume, The person saying that, Wants to justify sin.

[28 : 34] I know I did, When I was a newer believer. So please don't misunderstand, The message of
grace. Just because a written code, Is not used, Does not imply, Sin is okay.

This is where the rub comes in, For us. God commands us, To be holy, And then he tells us, To meet with him daily, Minute by minute, If we need to, So that we can have, What we need, To live that way.

It's in the relationship, Where the freedom is found. When you go, In the presence of God, You have to understand, That there is no condemnation, To those who are in Christ Jesus.

It's the time spent, With the Savior, Where one finds, The healing, That the heart needs. We all got, Issues, Right?

It's in his presence, Where fears are still, And that joy is found. You know, God made us, For that kind of fellowship. That's why he made man, To have fellowship.

[29 : 46] That's why we're made, In his image. And it's, Having fellowship with him, Is the only way, We can live, The way we should.

Only by focusing, On the love of Christ, Can we walk in obedience, To God. So, The book of Galatians, It's only five chapters, Or maybe six, Six I think.

And the first, Eight chapters of Romans, That's what they're about. They're the instructions, On the how, And the why, Of not walking in, By law, But walking in the spirit.

If you have never, Taken time to study those, I would encourage you, To do that. And if you have, Go back there, Stir yourself up, By way of reminder, As you pray about, These truths again.

Now some preachers, In the church, At large today, Do not understand, The full ramifications, Of the gospel. We read, As I quoted earlier, There is now, No condemnation, To those, Who are in, Christ Jesus.

[30 : 56] So anytime, A spirit of condemnation, Is used to motivate, Believers, To live for Christ, You know that, Ain't from the Lord. And believe me, I think, The unbelieving world, Sees that, And they don't want that either.

I think it keeps people away, From, The saving message. The law, We are under, Is the law, Of the spirit of Christ.

Galatians 3, 2 says, Did you receive, The spirit, By the works of the law, Or by the hearing of faith? God commands us, To be right with him, But then he makes, Full provision for us, To love him back. This is, God's program, That he established, Under the new covenant. What would a sermon be, Without a good quote, From Spurgeon, Right? Run, Run, And work, The law commands, But gives me neither feet, Or hands.

Sweeter sounds, The gospel brings, It bids me fly, And then gives me wings. Let's pray. Father, Thank you today.

[32 : 16] Thank you so much, For loving us, So much, That you would lay down your life, And shed your blood, To take away the things, That destroy our lives, And keep us from you, And all your goodness.

Thank you, Lord, That you love us, With an everlasting love. Help us, Each one of us, Lord, You know our hearts. Help us to just trust you more, And see you more.

Help us to take the time, To remember, All the ways, That you have led us. Help us to take the time, To not fear, As we live in this world, To simply, Put everything before you, And walk in faith.

Lord, We thank you, For the sure salvation, Lord, We thank you, That you're in control, And we thank you, That we know, What the end of the book says. Help us, To show you, To the world.

Amen. All right, I wanted to end this, Today, With a video clip. A few weeks ago, David was up here, And he gave a plug, For this video, Called, The American Gospel.

[33 : 21] I watched it, And I have to say, It's probably one of the best, Movies I've ever seen, Dealing with how human wisdom, Is imposed upon the gospel. And the movie also encourages you, Highly with the gospel itself.

So let's go ahead, And watch this before we sing, Okay? Okay. Thank you.