



+ This week at MRC we finished our final sermon in the Joshua series. Joshua pleads with the people of God urging them to remember who he is and what he has done and so to live in the light of that for the future.

We began by considering the self-esteem movement which largely began in the 1980s in California. The idea was that people who feel good about themselves will achieve more and do better in life. A study was undertaken by a number of Californian professors and the results were inconclusive. However the man who commissioned the study changed the results! It changed the way we teach our children, changed the way we parent, changed the way we deal with rehabilitation for prisoners and it seems to be based upon a lie! As we engage with books like Joshua we can find the truth difficult to grasp because we've been taught to think '***we can achieve if only we believe***'. However this final chapter in Joshua does not seek to massage our self-esteem - Joshua clearly shows the people that without God they are lost - all that they have is because of him. Of course true self-esteem does not come from simply kidding ourselves that we are okay, but rather it comes from understanding that we are broken and sinful and yet loved and forgiven by the God who made the universe - despite what we are like, he cares for us.

The drama of grace (v1-13)

Joshua initially outlines the fact that the people should not be here - this should never have happened. He says that (1) the promise to the patriarchs, (2) the exodus from Egypt, (3) wilderness wanderings and (4) the entrance into the land, is all of God's grace. Even Abraham, whom we easily think of as someone special, even Abraham worshipped foreign gods. God did not simply pluck him from obscurity, he plucked him from idolatry too! To show that it is all of him and not of us he repeats I - I - I and even then clarifies and verse 12 to 13 four times that you did not do this you did not do this.

Joshua is trying to help them see the salvation is all of the. Our trouble is we can too easily think that we contribute or improve upon this salvation. Perhaps we think that we can pay God back for this gift of grace? Perhaps we think for his salvation of us is not enough and so weak attempt to cover our same even though Jesus has fully covered it for us?

So Joshua remind them of the story of God's grace. Paradoxically though as the passage continues he outlines the ***demands*** of God's grace. God is faithful because he is the kind of God who makes promises so that people are to trust him and live in the light of his character.

The demand of grace (v14-28)

Too easily we can think that because God is the God of grace we need simply be passive. However again and again and again from verse 14 onwards the verb the Lord uses has he challenges his people is that they will serve him. Joshua outlines four aspects of what it means to serve Him and live in the light of God's grace:

→1. Clear away idols

Strikingly it seems to say is that God's people have a number of foreign gods in the midst. Gods of the Amorites and Egypt and from beyond the Euphrates. Despite the fact that they've seen God's mighty acts of salvation, maybe they've covered their bases by keeping is gods bring them with them? In the same way it's far too easy for us to worship the God of the Bible but also to keep the gods of the west or the gods of Oxford nearby.

→2. Change your heart

Verse 23 hopes to see what it means to change our heart. The word that Joshua uses is that we want to yield or incline our hearts to the Lord. He is calling us to repent and to believe. To turn our backs on the foreign gods and to turn towards the true and living God who can provide what he promises.

→3. Count the cost

Here Joshua read the small print for them but with a megaphone. He is calling them to count the cost of what it means to follow the Lord. He wants some of how difficult it will be on the consequences for getting it wrong.

At the heart of this section there is a an apparent paradox between verse 14 and verse 19 whether Lord Lord causes people to serve him but also verse 19 Joshua says that they are unable to serve him. Living under the new covenant this side of Jesus we interpret verse 19 in a slightly different way. Joshua is right in saying that they cannot Abbe the Lord and that he is unable to forgive them. However because we have Jesus and we live under the new covenant we are able to serve the Lord because he has put out is how do you spirit on us and given us new hearts. He is also able to forgive us because Jesus was punished our sins - God's right anger and justice falls on him rather than us. This means he was cut off that we will never be finely cut off.

→4. Covenant choices

The section finishes in v25-26 with a covenant being made between the Lord and his people. It is not a mistake this has happened at Shechem which reminds us of the initial covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12. Shechem is the kind of place where covenants are made and God's people commit and recommit themselves to him.

The book ends with a number of key individuals being buried in the land. This is the end of an era are but not the end of the story. We are meant to ask the question 'will the people of God keep the covenant? Will they yield their hearts to him? Will they serve him as they have promised? Will they get rid of foreign gods? Will they get rid of the Canaanites as they have been told to?'

By implication we are asked the same kinds of questions - will we yield our hearts to him? Will we serve him? Will we trust him and his promises and live in the light of them?

Here are some questions to start your group going as always feel free to adjust them to be appropriate for your home group

- How is this a passage about God's grace? What evidence is there in the first half that this is a work of God?
- How can we better remember our story of God's grace? How does this story change the way that we live?
- What verb does Joshua emphasise as he challenges the people to follow God from v14 onwards?
- How can Joshua say both v14 and v19? How does ***Jesus*** to change the way we understand verse 19?
- Why do you think the people had kept a hold of the foreign gods? How do we do this? Why is it such a danger?
- Why is there such an emphasis on this place being Shechem? why does the writer emphasise that Joshua, Joseph and Eleazer are buried here?
- How is this passage left open?

- What one thing will you take away from our studies in Joshua?