

**JOSHUA 23**  
**PASS IT ON!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 23 as we continue our study through this fascinating book on victorious Christian living.

As we have seen over the last several months, the children of Israel have crossed over the Jordan River and entered into the Promise Land, the land of Canaan.

And God has given them victory after victory as they defeated the enemies in the land of Canaan.

And these battles lasted some seven years and as they ended, it was time to divide the land between the tribes of Israel. Now let me also say this. Just because those battles were over, within the land there were still pockets of resistance that needed to be dealt with.

But now, it was up to the individual tribes to deal with them and drive them out. But they did not do that, at least not completely. And because of that they become a thorn in the side of the children of Israel. An irritant to their eyes you might say.

And in the end, because they did not listen to the Lord, they did not obey the Lord completely, they would take up the practices of these foreign nations and God would judge them for it.

We are currently in the last division of the book.

If you remember, the book of Joshua we divided up as follows,

***Joshua chapters 1-5 – How to enter the land – how to enter a life of victory!***

***Joshua chapters 6-21 – Conquest of the land – how to win the battles!***

*Joshua chapters 22-24 – Instruction on continued success and warnings of the dangers that are out there.*

And as Christians, what we need to remember is that maturity in the faith is not the result of winning one battle, or two battles, or even hundred battles. It is a battle over the enemy that lasts a long period of time, a lifetime! And in our lives, we should be growing in the Lord, maturing in the faith.

One of the problems today is that we want things instantaneously. But it does not work that way.

Do you remember growing up as a kid and how you wanted to be an adult, you wanted to do all the things that adults did? And of course it does not work like that. It takes many years to grow up and to mature and the same is true for us as Christians.

As we are going to see as we finish up the book of Joshua, that he first addresses the leaders of Israel, admonishing them to continue in the faith and if they don't, the results of their rebellion.

Then, in Joshua chapter 24 we see Joshua speak to the nation and as his life is coming to an end, he passes on the mantle to the next generation, you might say. He renews the covenant that God has made with them to remind them how to walk.

But this morning we are going to focus on passing the things of God to the leaders so that they can teach them to the people.

Make no mistake about it, leadership is important. It will either bring you to where you need to go, or it will crush you and lead you where you should not be going!

Let me share with you this article to show you what bad Christian leadership is doing for the faith of many. This article is from 2016, and things have not gotten any better. The title of this article is ***“Evangelicals Are Losing the Battle for the Bible. And They’re Just Fine with That.”*** The title itself should send shivers down your spine. Listen to just part of what this article had to say.

We are told,

LIKE MANY evangelical Christians, A. J. Zimmermann tells his conversion story with near-pointillistic detail. A 25-year-old recent divinity school graduate from Southern California, Zimmermann grew up in a non-religious household near Los Angeles with what he called “a lot of divorce” and an abusive stepfather. During his freshman year of high school, he writes:

***there was this really cute girl in my Spanish I class. We started talking and she invited me to go to youth group. I had no idea what that was, but I thought, “She’s cute, maybe this will work out.” I’d never been in that context before - guitars and music and teaching about the Bible. I just kind of sat there and I was like, “Okay, I’m open to whatever’s here.” And I had this sense of love and peace come out of nowhere, and I was crying and crying, and I was just really curious about what this was.***

Two days later, after learning “about Jesus and the cross and this whole salvation thing” at a second youth group meeting, Zimmermann committed his life to Christ. He became a regular churchgoer and went on to attend Azusa Pacific University, an evangelical Christian college east of Los Angeles. (The cute girl in Spanish class wound up dating his best friend.)

Zimmermann graduated with a degree in biblical studies, enrolled in Azusa Pacific's seminary program, married a fellow student (they struck up a conversation in a café after eyeing each other reading theology books), and began working part time as a youth pastor at a local church. He now directs a training program for prospective pastors at Life Pacific College, a Pentecostal seminary in San Dimas, California.

Zimmermann's prototypical evangelical experience is emblematic in one additional, unexpected way. Since graduating from high school, Zimmermann has undergone a revolution in his thinking about evangelicals' foundational text, the Bible, to the extent that he no longer regards the Bible as inerrant, dictated by God, historically accurate in all of its claims or even internally consistent with itself. "The Bible holds high authority in my life," Zimmermann told me recently. And yet, he added,

*I think it's important to remember the intent and purpose of the biblical texts. These texts were not intending to portray exact historical fact but to show how God is moving with history, alongside people [ . . . ] If we understand the term inerrancy to be "without error" then no, I don't view the Bible as inerrant [ . . . ] The Scripture is not trying to be without error. It is trying to communicate the love God has for His creation.*

I was introduced to Zimmermann by one of his seminary teachers, an Azusa Pacific biblical studies professor named Karen Strand Winslow, who put me in touch with several of her students after I asked her what young evangelicals think about the Bible these days.

In addition to his dismissal of biblical inerrancy, Zimmermann told me he no longer believes the biblical book of Genesis is “concerned [. . .] with young-versus-old-earth, literal days of creation stuff.” He said biblical passages appearing to condemn homosexuality are products of their time and do not necessarily apply to present-day same-sex couples “committed in a consensual relationship.” The same goes for New Testament prohibitions against women in church leadership. “We often forget that Jesus’s ministry was founded by women and that the first evangelists were women,” he added.

Overall, Zimmermann said, the days when evangelicals defined themselves by their uncompromising style of biblical interpretation are over. “Before my generation [. . .] it was like, if you don’t believe this doctrine, you’re undermining the work of Christ on the cross. [My generation is] not as okay with the simplified answers.”

Evangelical Christianity in America is in the midst of a wholesale generational, cultural, and doctrinal transformation. Confronted by a secularizing and diversifying society, evangelicals are abandoning long-held political allegiances, softening their views on sexuality, grappling with the racial divide in their churches, and rethinking their entire approach to ministry and evangelization. Underlying all of these developments is a more fundamental change in the way evangelicals understand and interpret their most cherished text, the Bible.

Though evangelicals proclaim themselves - and are portrayed in most media accounts - to be univocal followers of an inerrant, plainly interpreted Bible, in fact there is widening diversity in their approach to Scripture. Like Zimmermann, a growing number of evangelicals are abandoning “the simplified answers” and seeking a richer, more nuanced, more challenging engagement with Scripture, one grounded not in aphorisms or political ideology, but in what Zimmermann called the deeper “truth of who God is.”

This quest has led many evangelicals to revise their interpretation of key biblical passages (especially those addressing sexual or social justice themes), downgrade parts of Scripture as historical anachronisms, and reject the political call to arms still sounded by a dwindling generation of conservative elders. A new evangelical theology is taking shape, one that retains the Bible as its centerpiece, but understands it very differently. Evangelicals once summarized their approach to Scripture with a staccato catchphrase: “The Bible says it. I believe it. That settles it.” Today, especially among younger evangelicals, each part of that formula is undergoing revision. “I’ve never been in the camp of wanting to draw these hard lines,” Zimmermann told me. He went on:

*My hard lines are sort of, “Just go with the basic statements of the faith.” Yes, I believe in Jesus, and if people don’t believe in Jesus, alright, there’s room for conversation there. I never want to be the one to count someone out. I don’t think that’s my job. What I’ve seen in the Scriptures is to love, and love, and love, and keep on loving until they kill you.*

This is a big, variegated change, with profound consequences for evangelicals’ distinct religiosity and their often combative relationship with mainstream American society. So far, no single observer has captured the change, or its ramifications, in its entirety.

But the picture is coming into focus as journalists, scholars, and evangelical leaders grapple with increasing sophistication and candor with evangelicalism’s uncertain future in a secularizing America. An array of recent publications, both online and off, portray a church taking determined steps to survive by rethinking some of its basic approaches to faith. . . .

Thanks to America's recent about-face toward same-sex relationships, that shift is now observable in real time, both in print and online. "I'm opening a can of worms," writes Ken Wilson, a prominent Michigan pastor, at the start of his 2014 book, *A Letter to My Congregation: An Evangelical Pastor's Path to Embracing People Who are Gay, Lesbian and Transgender into the Company of Jesus*.

In 216 densely argued pages, Wilson tells how what began as a "fleeting unease" grew into a wholesale reevaluation not only of what the Bible says about sexuality, but of basic assumptions about biblical truth long considered sacrosanct within evangelicalism. . . .

Sexuality figures prominently, too, in megachurch pastor Adam Hamilton's recent book-length effort to persuade evangelicals that many of their most cherished biblical views are the product of convention, not timeless truths. "There are statements on [the Bible's] pages that I don't believe capture the character and will of God," Hamilton writes at the beginning of *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today*.

Hamilton, named a Distinguished Evangelist by the United Methodist Church, goes on to dismiss many totems of conservative Christianity - the six-day creation of the world, subordination of women, opposition to homosexuality - replacing them with what he calls "an attempt to honestly wrestle with the difficult questions often raised by thoughtful Christians and non-Christians concerning things taught in the Bible." One thing his book does not contain: claims of biblical inerrancy or scientific accuracy, which he calls "flawed [. . .] When the Bible is read while holding these assumptions the reader will, at some point, become confused, misguided or profoundly disappointed."

To the dismay of conservative leaders, views like Hamilton's are gaining ground. Just one in five of all Americans - and only 13 percent of those under age 30 - currently believes that "the Bible is the actual word of God and should be taken literally, word for word," according to the American Bible Society, which each year conducts what it calls a national "State of the Bible" survey, measuring American attitudes toward Scripture. Most Americans hold a more nuanced opinion of the Bible, viewing it as either an inspired text with historical errors or "just another book of teachings written by men."

Close to a majority believes "the Bible, the Koran and the book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths."

In a 2009 study by the Barna Group, an evangelical research organization, more than 20 percent of self-proclaimed "born-again" Christians disagreed that the Bible "is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches."

Sixty percent of born-again denied that Satan is real, and nearly 40 percent said they did not believe "Jesus lived a sinless life."

- <http://bit.ly/2kHfNbt>

I know that was a little long, but you need to understand what is happening in leadership today and that bad leadership is affecting the lives of many Christians, and, not in a good way.

This morning we are going to see good leadership as Joshua will **PASS IT ON!** In other words, he is old, advanced in years and he wants to pass on the things of God to the leaders who will be teaching the people.



I have broken these verses here in Joshua chapter 23 down into six points. They are,

***ADMONISHING THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL – JOSHUA 23:1-2***

***A LOOK BACK – JOSHUA 23:3-5***

***PRESS ON – JOSHUA 23:6-11***

***DON'T FALL AWAY – JOSHUA 23:12-13***

***CLING TO THE WORD – JOSHUA 23:14***

***GOD IS FAITHFUL – LISTEN TO HIM – JOSHUA 23:15-16***

And, as you can see, this is so important in the days we are living in, godly leadership that will lead the people to the things of God and help them to grow and mature in the faith.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Joshua chapter 23, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study this topic – ***PASS IT ON!***

## **JOSHUA 23**

### **VERSES 1-2**

Joshua is about 110 years old now and he knows his time is short. But before he dies, he wants to give the leaders words of encouragement so they will carry on the work of God.

And here we see the heart of a man of God. There must have been so much going through his mind as his body began to fail and yet, he is not focused on himself, but upon the next generation, upon others!

And what I want you to see as we go through this chapter is that Joshua is not focused on himself or what he thinks. He is focused on the Lord and getting the leaders to stay committed to the Lord, to follow what God has told them.

That is a good leader. But today, we have leaders that are promoting what they think, how they feel, what they want. That is not a good thing and I am sorry, but if you go to a church where that is taught, get out! Why stay in a place that is going to hurt you spiritually speaking?

And I have heard all the excuses.

“All my friends are there, so how can I leave?” If you care about them, warn them but don’t stay when you are not being taught the Word of God, the truths of God found in the Word of God!

“They have a great Sunday School program, lots of kids!” Hey, if they are not teaching you correctly, what do you think they are teaching your kids?

“We have been there so long; we don’t want to start over!” Are you kidding me?

Joshua did not compromise his faith but stood strong in the Lord and he was passing that down to the leaders in Israel.

So what we see here is that Joshua is ***ADMONISHING THE LEADERS IN ISRAEL!***

As we read on, we will see that Joshua has them take ***A LOOK BACK*** at their history.

Let’s read on and see what he has to tell them.

### VERSES 3-5

As we have seen, Joshua also tells us that a long time has passed by, maybe some 20 years now since they have entered the Promise Land.

Seven of those years were fighting together as a nation against these nations and then another thirteen years the individual tribes were fighting those pockets of resistance, occupying the land that was allotted them.

And what we see here is Joshua wants them to remember what God has done for them, that this was not because of their might, their strength, their ingenuity, but all that God has done for them.

In other words, apart from God they would have none of this.

Remember back in Joshua 1:5-9 what the Lord told Joshua to encourage Him in the work that was before him, the battles that he was going to face.

He told him, **“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”**

Joshua learned those lessons, he trusted in the Lord, he trusted that what God had promised He was more than able to bring to pass and now Joshua was passing this on to the leaders in Israel.

What a great lesson for us as we too can encourage others to walk by faith and not by sight!

And folks, that is done as we share with others what God is doing in our lives. The lessons He is showing us. The victories that He has given us. Looking back on what God has done to not only encourage us, but to help others in their walk with the Lord!

Joshua reminds them all that God has done for them. It truly is what the Psalmist said in Psalm 44:3, **“For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, Nor did their own arm save them; But it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, Because You favored them.”**

Don't lose sight of who is in control and I will give you a hint, it is not you! It obviously is the Lord and isn't that what we desire? Of course it is! And when we are in control, it is a disaster!

And here's the thing. I think that the children of Israel trusted in the Lord for those big battles, and I don't think that is what Joshua was concerned about.

I think he was more concerned about those times of peace and prosperity, that truly is the most dangerous times for a nation and for individuals to go through because we tend to take our eyes off the enemy and yes, even off the Lord!

Let me give you this perspective. We are told,

Sometimes we as Christians need to stop along life's road and look back. Although it might have been winding and steep, we can see how God directed us by His faithfulness. Here's how F. E. Marsh described what the Christian can see when he looks back:

*The deliverances the Lord has wrought (Deut. 5:15).*

*The way He has led (Deut. 8:2)*

*The blessings He has bestowed (Deut. 32:7-12).*

*The victories He has won (Deut. 11:2-7).*

*The encouragements He has given (Josh. 23:14).*

When we face difficulties, we sometimes forget God's past faithfulness. We see only the detours and the dangerous path. But look back and you will also see the joy of victory, the challenge of the climb, and the presence of your traveling Companion who has promised never to leave you nor forsake you.

- Source Unknown

And here's the thing. If we don't do this, if we don't look back and remember all that God has done, we tend to forget. And thus, as we forget all that God has done in the past, we don't pass anything on to others to encourage them.

Joshua did not forget, and he just shared with them all that God had done. He not only brought them into the Promise Land by crossing over the Jordan River. But He gave them victory after victory. He drove out the enemy and all they had to do is walk by faith and see the victory that God had given them.

All that God had promised them came to pass and Joshua is telling them to remember all that God had done because you can use this to encourage you in the work ahead, the things you will face.

And, as leaders, you will need to pass this on to the people!

How important it is for us to take **A LOOK BACK!**

Next, we will see Joshua encourage them to **PRESS ON!**

VERSES 6-11

This is so important for us to understand, that we must ***PRESS ON!***

It is so easy to get complacent and when that happens, you will slip, you will start moving backwards, you will start moving away from the Lord! Be careful and continue moving forward!

And we will talk about clinging to the Word of God as we read on but that truly is the key to pressing on.

You need the Word of God to guide you and for many, that is where it starts and that is where it ends.

But what Joshua is telling them to do is to take in the Word of God, let it guide you and then you must walk by faith, you must ***PRESS ON!***

And I want you to see the point that Joshua is making here. Listen again to what he said in Joshua 23:7, “**and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them.**”

In other words, they were to separate themselves from these pagan nations, they were not to follow after them.

Now some have a problem with this but listen carefully. If you follow after the unsaved, then your life will reflect where they are going and they are moving away from God, not towards God!

Thus, in Joshua 23:8 Joshua tells them, “**but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.**”

And the idea here is simple. Don't follow the unsaved but the Lord, hold fast or press on. They were doing this, but the warning is here for us to take heed. Yes, you may be following the Lord right now, but be careful, it is easy to fall prey to the things of this world, to follow the unsaved, and as you do, you are not following the Lord!

Remember what Paul said in Philippians 3:12-14, **“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

I think most of us know these verses, but do we really know them? What I mean is this. Do we truly apply them to our lives as Paul did?

Paul realized that his life was not perfect, he still struggled with things, he had not been perfected yet in a practical sense. But notice what he did do. He didn't let that stop him from ***PRESSING ON!***

That is so important for us to understand.

“But I blew it the other day, God is done with me!”

“I got mad at my wife and said some things that I shouldn't have said. I don't even know if I am saved!”

“How can God use a person like me?”

And we can go on and on.

Here is what you need to do if you feel that way.

Repent and walk, ***PRESS ON!***

Listen to what Paul said, “**... but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead . . .**”

But that is Paul and what I have done is far worse than anything that Paul did. He could forget about those minor things, but mine are way too big!

Are you kidding me?

Paul persecuted the church. He was there consenting to the death of Stephen. He pulled Christians out of their homes, trying to get them to deny their faith. He pulled them out of their homes and brought them to the religious leaders in Jerusalem. He was not a nice guy and when Paul got saved, the church in Jerusalem was a little nervous about him because they thought it may be a trick!

And what did Paul do? “**... but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead . . .**”

And that is exactly what we need to do! Forget the past, learn from it, but don't dwell upon it and reach forward. What are we to reach for?

Paul tells us, “**... I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**”

Keep your eyes upon Jesus, keep reaching towards the finish line and if you do, you will be able to say as Paul said at the end of his life, “**For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**” II Timothy 4:6-8.



Remember during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome he wrote this to the Philippians, **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”** Philippians 1:21-26.

And Paul was released from prison for a period of time but now he has been re-arrested, and he knows his time is short, he knows he is going to be put to death for his faith in Christ this time!

And look at how Paul saw his life or really the ending of his life of faith. He looked at his life as a drink offering to the Lord, (Numbers 15:1-10).

You see, first there was the burnt offering to the Lord.

Then the grain offering.

And the last offering was the drink offering.

It is as Hiebert said, “His whole life has been presented to God as a living sacrifice; now his death, comparable to the pouring out of the wine as the last act of the sacrificial ceremony, will complete the sacrifice.”

And Paul, at the end of his life saw that it was time for a departure!

And that word “**departure**,” ANALUSIS, (an-al'-oo-sis) in the Greek, carries with it a few different ideas.

It speaks of the unloosing of a ship from its moors, as Paul is ready to set sail home to heaven.

It speaks of the unyoking of a weary team of animals after a hard day's work, and Paul has finished the work that God has called him to do, he is going to enter that rest.

It is the striking of a tent, taking it down so you can move on and Paul was going to leave this earthly tent for a mansion!

Paul knew he was going to die, and he is passing the mantle of ministry to Timothy, his son in the faith.

Again, that is good leadership, passing the things of God down to the next leader!

Thus, Paul uses his life as an example to Timothy. Notice what he tells him.

First, he says that he fought the good fight.

Then, that he finished the race.

And lastly, through all that he had been through, he kept the faith.

And because of that he is waiting to receive his rewards for faithful service when the Lord returns, which tells me he expected the Lord to come soon.

Are you fighting the good fight, finishing the race, keeping the faith, awaiting the Lord's return?

Paul is encouraging you to do so and receive the rewards that you will one day present at the feet of Jesus for He is the one who has enabled all of us to do these things!

He is encouraging us to ***PRESS ON!***

Let me share this with you to encourage you, that no matter what you are going through right now, keep taking those steps of faith, one step at a time. ***PRESS ON!***

We are told,

Well-known commentator and author Eric Sevarid said that the best lesson he ever learned was the principle of the "next mile." He recalled how he learned the principle:

“During World War II, I and several others had to parachute from a crippled Army transport plane into the mountainous jungle on the Burma-India boarder. It was several weeks before an armed relief expedition could reach us, and then we began a painful, plodding march out to civilized India. We were faced by a 140-mile trek, over mountains in August heat and monsoon rains.

In the first hour of the march I rammed a boot nail deep into one foot; by evening I had bleeding blisters the size of 50-cent pieces on both feet. Could I hobble 140 miles? Could the others, some in worse shape than I, complete such a distance?

We were convinced we could not. But we could hobble to that ridge, we could make the next friendly village for the night. And that, of course, was all we had to do . . .”

Eric Sevarid used the “next mile” principle many other times during his career, whether the task was writing a book or writing scripts for radio and television.

- Bits and Pieces, February 1990, pp. 11-12

You see, instead of looking back and trying to live in the past, they kept their eyes forward, moving on, not looking to the future, but taking it one step at a time. And by doing that they were able to make that 140-mile trek!

Keep your eyes upon Jesus and ***PRESS ON!***

And here is the warning that if we don't press on, we will fail. Thus, our next point, ***DON'T FALL AWAY!***

VERSES 12-13

The word “**cling**” or “**cleave**” in verse 12 speaks of a close and intimate relationship. You see, you can’t play with fire without eventually getting burned. If you cling to them, cleave to the unsaved, you will become just like them is the warning!

And that is exactly what happened to the nation of Israel. They become one with the enemy and ended up serving their gods instead of the true and living God who delivered them out of Egypt, preserved them those forty years in the wilderness, and now has brought them into the land of Canaan, the Promised Land.

The enemy does a great job of deceiving us, and we are ripping ourselves off if we side with them, getting the garbage when God has opened His kingdom up to us!

And remember the article I opened up with and how these so-called Christians were compromising their faith, even if they were unaware of it, by following the practices of the World instead of what God has already said!

Remember what one of these leaders wrote, “I think it’s important to remember the intent and purpose of the biblical texts. These texts were not intending to portray exact historical fact but to show how God is moving with history, alongside people [ . . . ] If we understand the term inerrancy to be “without error” then no, I don’t view the Bible as inerrant [ . . . ] The Scripture is not trying to be without error. It is trying to communicate the love God has for His creation.”

And they are getting others to follow that lie that you can’t trust the Bible. And here’s the thing. If it is not truthful on these other issues, why is it truthful regarding the love of God? You see, you can’t ignore the fact that if part of the Bible is a lie or untruthful, then you can’t trust any of it!

But we can and I truly believe that this is the key to not falling away. And that is our next point, ***CLING TO THE WORD!***

#### VERSE 14

What Joshua is doing here is that yes, he is going to pass away soon, he is going to die. But he is reminding them that God's Word to them has not failed and thus, follow what God is showing you. Don't listen to these pagan nations, their secular view but hold a Biblical worldview.

And that is God's call to us. To listen and follow Him.

Remember what God said to the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the book of Jeremiah, **“Has a nation changed its gods, Which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory For what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, And be horribly afraid; Be very desolate,’ says the Lord. ‘For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water.’”** Jeremiah 2:11-13.

As you can see here, God is trying to get their attention, to wake them up by looking at the other nations of Cyprus and Kedar, from east to west you might say. (Jeremiah 2:10)

You see, these nations worshiped false gods and yet they have not turned their backs on them.

But God's people, who worship the true and living God, have turned from Him and have gone after that which will not profit them, these false gods, these worthless idols!

Israel, whose glory was the Lord, gave this all up, turned from Him to serve false gods, that should have gotten their attention, but it didn't!

Thus, God calls out to the heavens and tells them to be astonished at what has taken place, what His people have done, and He has two powerful rebukes for them.

God's first rebuke against them is they have turned from Him, the fountain of living waters.

Remember what Jesus said in John 7:37-38, “**. . . ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’**”

You see, moving water that is found in streams and rivers is cool, fresh, it is satisfying, and it is pure!

As we come to Jesus and allow His Spirit to fill us and overflow us, we too will be satisfied.

But when you turn from the Lord that void must be filled with something and that is the second point that the Lord is making against them.

This second rebuke has to do with cisterns, broken cisterns.

Keep in mind that a cistern is nothing more than a storage tank to hold rainwater that had been cut out of the rock.

And you could spend months cutting this out with a hammer and chisel. Then when the rain would come you would check out your cistern to see if it could hold water.

Sometimes a crack would develop which would cause the water to drain out and made the cistern worthless.

But instead of just letting all the work go to waste, they would cut shelves into the walls of this cistern and use it as a burial spot for the dead.

And think about it. Even if those cisterns did hold water, it was never cool, refreshing, satisfying, it was never pure!

W. H. Thomson put it this way, “The best cisterns, even those in solid rock, are strangely liable to crack . . . , and if by constant care they are made to hold, yet the water collected from clay roofs or from marly [which is a crumbly mixture of clays, calcium and magnesium carbonates, and remnants of shells that is sometimes found under desert sands and used as fertilizer for lime-deficient soils.] soil has the colour of weak soapsuds, the taste of earth or the stable, is full of worms, and in the hour of greatest need it utterly fails.”

And yet that is what God’s people went after!

What does this mean to us spiritually speaking?

I think that the waters that God has for us, that pure water is not only speaking of Him but His Word.

And as a person moves away from God’s Word, they will carve out for themselves a belief system that fits them.

And anytime a person does so it will be polluted, foul tasting, full of garbage and always empty or non-satisfying! And eventually all systems will become a tomb in which you will be buried in.

Think of the millions and millions of people that have rejected the pure waters, the living waters of God, who have rejected His Word and gone after systems such as material things or religious practices, the worlds philosophy and they have become buried in it!

Paul warns us in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

May we not forget that!

***CLING TO THE WORD*** and that leads us to our last point, ***GOD IS FAITHFUL – LISTEN TO HIM!***

#### VERSES 15-16

Joshua has warned them what will happen if they follow the Lord, they will be blessed. And he has warned them what will happen if they don't follow the Lord, they will be cursed, they will be brought into captivity!

And isn't that what sin does in our life, it brings us into captivity! We are in bondage to it. We are slaves to sin!

And yet, Jesus has told us, **“... ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.’”** John 8:34-36.

Please understand that whatever controls your life outside of Christ you are in bondage to, it is only in Jesus that we are free; we are bond slaves to Christ, freely surrendering our lives to Him!

Paul said in Galatians 4:7, **“Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”**



And notice that Jesus says, “**Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**”

Why go back to the bondage that Jesus has set you free from? It makes no sense!

It is as one writer wrote, “So the slave of sin cannot by himself change his status. He cannot convert himself, nor can he be converted by any fellow-sinner. . . . The liberator from our bondage must come from outside the ranks of enslaved humanity.” (Tasker)

And the One who sets us free from the bondage of sin we are in is Jesus! Don’t go back to what Jesus has set you free from!

Let me share a few verses dealing with the faithfulness of God, and you will see that God is faithful, and thus, we must follow Him!

First of all, in Psalm 36:5 we are told, “**Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.**”

Notice the picture here of God’s faithfulness. It reaches to the heavens, it is unending. Whatever God has told us He is faithful to bring to pass.

In Psalm 37:3, “**Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.**”

I love this. We are to trust in the Lord and as we do, we will do good, we will do what He wants us to do. We are to dwell in the land or dwell where God has called us. And we are to feed upon His faithfulness or what God has said, we can trust, and it will give our spirit nourishment as we walk in faith!

Then, in Psalm 119:90 we are told, “**Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.**”

The faithfulness of God is unending. I like that because we can't say that yes, God was faithful in the past but not in the present. It goes to all generations and we can rest in that fact, we can trust what God's Word has told us from Genesis through Revelation!

In Isaiah 25:1 we are told, **“O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, For You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”**

I like that faithfulness and truth are linked together. We can trust God because He is truthful and thus, what He has spoken, He will bring to pass in our lives because He is faithful!

And many of us know of what is said in Jeremiah 3:22-23, **“Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.”**

God is so faithful that Jeremiah tells us that His faithfulness is ***GREAT!*** We can trust that His mercy and compassion will not fail because He is faithful to what He has spoken!

And here is what we are to do, what Psalm 89:1 tells us and what Joshua was truly doing. **“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.”**

Our lives are so filled with the things of God that we just sing forth of His mercies and we let others know of the faithfulness of God as we share with them what God has done in our lives!

And I can tell you that when I share with people of how God promised to bring me to Wisconsin one day to be a pastor and how some eleven years after the promise, He brought it to pass, people are amazed at the faithfulness of God. That is just one example. Share your faith, share what God is doing in your life and let them see the faithfulness of God!

And let me sum this all up like this.

We are to **LOOK BACK** at all that God has done in our lives and then we are to **PRESS ON**, move forward, keeping our eyes upon Jesus. Why? Because it is easy to fall and thus, **DON'T FALL AWAY!** But what can we do? **CLING TO THE WORD OF GOD!** And the reason we need to do that is because **GOD IS FAITHFUL** and thus, we need to **LISTEN TO HIM!**

May we, as Joshua admonished the children of Israel, “**but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.**” Joshua 23:8.

And let me end with this. Today we see conferences with the older, mature Christians not allowed to teach. They are going after the young Christians and they are truly missing out on the wisdom that God has given to these older teachers!

Remember when Rehoboam took over the Kingdom from his father Solomon. And Jeroboam came, as well as the rest of the nation asking Rehoboam to lighten the burden that Solomon placed upon them. And in I Kings 12:8 we are told what happened, “**But he rejected the counsel which the elders gave him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.**”

And in the end, the Kingdom was divided because he did not listen to the counsel of the elders!

Joshua is instructing the leadership in Israel to listen and obey the things of God and we would do well if we listened and obeyed.