

**Joshua 24:14-18**

***14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! 17 It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. 18 And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."***

***Renewed to serve the Lord***

- 1. By grace the LORD chose us.***
- 2. By faith we choose to serve him***

Walking through the aisles of a Christian book store you are bound to see these words from Joshua chapter etched, engraved, or written a piece of home décor. ***But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. (JOSHUA 24:15B)*** As you look up from the wooden keepsake box, the canvas print, or the brass door knocker, your eyes might come across another familiar piece of Christian artwork that's based on Scripture verse that holds a similar theme. The picture of Jesus standing outside the door and knocking is probably a familiar one to you. You probably have seen it before in a Christian Book Store or in our church basement. You may even have your own copy of this picture hanging in your home. This picture of Jesus is based off a passage that comes from Revelation 3:20. In this passage from Revelation, Jesus himself is speaking and he is addressing the Christians in a town called Laodicea. The Laodiceans were believers. They had heard the good news of Jesus, but they had become lazy Christians. Lax in their faith, they had become lukewarm to the gospel and indifferent to the will of God. And so, Jesus challenges these Christians to live their faith, he challenges them to let Jesus rule their hearts, to let Jesus in. ***"20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).***

Now to make things clear, neither the passage from Joshua nor the passage from Revelation teaches a decision theology; that is, that we need to make a decision to come to faith in Jesus. In fact, the Bible says something very different. It tells us repeatedly that we are by nature dead in sin. Before we came to faith we couldn't make a decision to believe in him, because we couldn't do anything spiritually speaking - a dead man can't open a door. But rather through the word working in our hearts God the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life and brings us to faith. Dead in sin, now alive in Christ. We did not choose him, but he chose us. He made life come to our cold dead hearts. He made us born again through the power of his Word, through the power of his Baptism. It is clear from Scripture that we cannot by our own thinking or choosing, believe in Jesus Christ our Lord or come to him, but by his grace the LORD calls unbelievers out of the death and darkness of spiritual death to the light and life of being a believer.

Now that God has given us spiritual life he wants us to live it. Now that the LORD Jesus has made us members of his family through faith, he wants to dwell with us, he wants to make his home in our hearts. Therefore, he does not want us not to ignore his word and his presence, but to listen to his voice. Too many times we shut him outside with our disobedience and our indifference toward him and his word. Yet in his love, he still comes to us and he knocks. Day after day, moment after moment, he knocks. He wants us to open the door and let him in and to allow him to guide our hearts and minds and actions.

Joshua is addressing believers as he talks to the children of God who have become lax in their faith and he challenges them to make a decision - certainly not a decision to come to faith in God, but rather - Joshua challenges these believers to live their faith and serve their God. He challenges them to not to give into the bad habits and the awful sins of the world around them.

We meet today on the threshold of sorts. As we observe this Labor Day weekend, we mark the transition from summer to fall. School has started, and whether or not you are in school or you have kids in school there is often a change in emphasis and activity on or around this weekend as we all kind of switch over from summer to fall. Maybe we found that during the summer months we relaxed a little too much when it came to our faith. Maybe we can identify some questionable habits we got into or we got away from some good spiritual habits during the summer months. Maybe it is that as we stand at the threshold of a new season we are looking to make some changes, adjust, be rededicated and renewed in our faith. T

Therefore, as we stand at this threshold of sorts, it is fitting that we listen to this challenge and as Christians we are encouraged to resist the sins of this world, to throw away the acts of disobedience, and instead, continually choose to serve our God. Listen, for our Lord Jesus is knocking on our hearts through these words from Joshua. ***14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the***

***gods your forefathers worshipped... and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served or the gods of {those} in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."***

Joshua was talking to believers, but they were believers who had been heavily influenced by their unbelieving neighbors. They were believers, but they had become complacent in their faith. They had fallen into sin, into the worship of false gods, the gods their fathers had foolishly worship, and the gods of their neighbors. And because of this the people had engaged in many other God-angering habits. Joshua therefore perceived a general indifference and laziness in their life of faith, it seemed that the people, as a whole, had no real desire to serve and obey and listen to the true God. So Joshua pounds on their hearts with these strong words, <sup>15</sup> ***But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...*** Joshua presents God's people with a choice. They could continue to abandon and ignore the true God who had done so much for them, or they could throw away and shake off the influences of the sinful world around them and fear the LORD and serve and worship God.

To Joshua the choice was clear, and even if he had to stand alone as the only faithful believer that is what he would do. Joshua makes it clear that as a believer he had been daily led to serve the only faithful and true God, and he was determined to keep it that way. And at the same time, he expresses the importance of his role as head of the household to lead those under his care to follow the LORD as well. Joshua's choice and his choice for his family is clear. ***But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.***

The choice seems like an obvious one. Fear and worship the powerful God and Lord, or trust in things that have no power. It seems like an obvious choice, but the Israelites had been so heavily influenced by the world around them that many of them chose to let other things take the place of honor that only the LORD deserves.

In the words leading up to this text Joshua reminds the people why choosing to serve God is a rather easy choice. In the first 13 verses of chapter 24 Joshua gives a quick review of God's salvation history. The faithful God who in goodness chose to show favor on Abraham and his descendents had delivered them from the Egyptians, and he had given them victory in the Promised Land. The faithful God who saved them and protected them deserved the full honor and praise of his chosen people. And that faithfulness of God is what made Joshua emboldened in his faith so that he would declare, ***But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."***

Whether we like or not, we cannot escape the negative influences of this world. And the devil and this world would love to have us become so accustomed to sin that we become indifferent to what God's Word has to say. Our sinful flesh is not much help either as not only is our flesh indifferent but is by nature our sinful hearts are

rebellious against God's Word. While much has changed since the time of Joshua we too live in a world that would try to influence us into putting our trust in things other than our faithful God. We too have a heart that is too easily enticed when the world dangles money, pride, greed and pleasures, and countless other false gods before us. How often don't we find ourselves ignoring God and serving such powerless things. As Christians, with the Spirit's help, let us daily make the choice to serve God instead of these things not simply on a year by year basis, not even a day by day basis, but on a moment by moment basis. When you are tempted to become angry with your spouse hear the call of your Lord to love and respect your husband or your wife and choose to serve the Lord instead of serving the impulses of your human nature. When you are tempted by greed to gamble excessively or selfishly overspend, hear the call of your Lord and choose to serve him instead of your greedy flesh. When the temptation comes knocking to gossip, or lie, or give into lust know that your Savior is knocking too. He desires to dwell with you and you with him as you live out the life he gave you. In moments of temptation we are to listen to God's plea for our hearts. Instead of shutting God out to serve our own desires we are to let God in and let him rule our hearts so that we may serve him. We are God's children. We have been made alive in Christ and now he gives us the power to serve our God. We are emboldened and enabled to more regularly chose to serve God when we more regularly consider the faithfulness and the goodness of our powerful God.

Our God is so kind and so gracious that he chose us to be his own. He kept his promise to send his Son; and through the God-man named Jesus he saved us from our sins. He gives us power over sin and death. Having brought us over from spiritual death to eternal life, he guides and protects us through this life we live in the here and now. In his power he supplies us with all that we need for our daily and eternal life. Year after year, it is clear that the Lord is good. Day after day, it is so apparent that the Lord is faithful. Moment after moment the Lord knocks on the hearts of his children through his word and he wants us to let him in. In his mercy God chose us to be his own, and now he calls us to serve him in faithfulness. And so, as Christians, we gladly serve Jesus. As Christians we gladly live for him who was born and died for us and was raised again. As his chosen people, rescued from the darkness of unbelief, we gladly throw off the deeds of darkness and live in the light of Christ.

Let us be renewed, season after season, day after day, moment after moment to serve our faithful God. To hear this challenge which has been laid down by God and respond like the Joshua, ***as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.***  
Amen.