

ENTER AT YOUR OWN REST

Studies in the Book of Joshua

"Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it"

Alan Redpath

Text

Joshua 24:29-33

Joshua 24:29 Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old.

Joshua 24:30 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

Joshua 24:31 Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.

Joshua 24:32 The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

Joshua 24:33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

Topic

We're encouraged to reflect on the burials of Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar

Title

"Dead Men Tell Bold Tales"

Introduction

An old man had died. His funeral was in progress and the country preacher talked at length of the good traits of the deceased, what an honest man he was, and what a loving husband and kind father he was.

Finally, the widow leaned over and whispered to one of her children, "Go up there and take a look in the coffin and make sure that's really your pa."

Eulogies are sometimes exaggerated to make the deceased seem better in their death than they were in life.

No exaggeration was necessary for Joshua. He was eulogized as “the servant of the Lord” and we’re told that “Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua.”

Joshua’s life of faith inspired others to follow the Lord. To further inspire us the writer mentioned the patriarch Joseph. The faith of our spiritual fathers, as recounted in Scripture, ought to inspire us.

There’s another death recorded, that of Eleazar, another giant. But the emphasis at his death is on his son, Phinehas, who always took up the invitation to serve the Lord no matter the cost.

Looking back on these deceased saints we ought to be inspired. Looking around at God’s contemporary saints we are being invited to serve the Lord.

I’ll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 The Faith Of Your Fathers Endues You With Inspiration, and #2 The Faith Of Your Fathers Extends You An Invitation.

#1 The Faith Of Your Fathers
Endues You With Inspiration
(v29-32)

I don’t want to be morbid, but I ask you this. If you were to die today, what would your eulogy sound like? Would the minister need to exaggerate to make you seem spiritual?

It’s a reasonable question because each of us is providing the material for our eulogies by how we live each day.

We should strive to earn the eulogy Joshua received. If it can honestly be said of us that we were “the servant of the Lord” it will be enough.

Joshua’s entire life and career are a case study in servanthood. We’ll highlight a few things.

Joshua 24:29 Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old.

Joshua 24:30 And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

Joshua started out as the apprentice - chosen by Moses to assist and succeed him. It was a tough gig. One of the very first things Joshua was involved with was the giving of the Ten Commandments by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. As Moses' apprentice and assistant, Joshua accompanied him but only part way up the mount. He was apparently not allowed in to the cloud of God's glory because only Moses was commanded to do so (Exodus 24).

Think of it. Moses was in the presence of glory. The people were comfortable back in their encampment. Joshua was alone on the mount. Not too glorious.

Would I wait for Moses forty days on the mount after being shut-out of the meeting with God?

A while later Joshua was tapped to be one of the twelve spies to go in to the Promised Land and give a scouting report. Ten spies returned with a message of doom-and-gloom. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, encouraged Moses and the Israelites to press forward. The immoral majority won the argument. It added a forty-year detour to Joshua's career as he wandered through the desert watching that generation die off.

Would I remain among such a people? Or would I move on to something more my liking?

At one point he saw his leader and mentor, Moses, blow it by striking the Rock when God told him only to speak to the Rock. Moses was not allowed to enter the land. Not exactly the way Joshua thought he'd come to succeed Moses.

Could I survive the fall of a mentor? Or would it cause me to stumble?

Loneliness; unexpected delays; personal disappointments. Those are just a few of the things Joshua dealt with. If at the end of your life you think you will be called "the servant of the Lord," you, too, will have to deal with them.

You see, the thing about being a servant is you are treated like a servant! It is when you find yourself being treated like a servant that you learn if you are one.

Being treated like a servant isn't so bad. It puts you in fine company. In addition to all God's faithful saints, it puts you in the company of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who said of Himself that He came to serve and not be served. He humbled Himself to serve you to the point of dying on the Cross.

When I understand I am serving Him then I can be left out of the important meeting. I can remain among the disobedient and help them. I can overcome the failings of those over me. In fact, I can do all things because it is Jesus who is strengthening me.

Being a servant is a high calling, a high privilege. Don't let things undermine it for you.

Joshua 24:31 Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.

This was Joshua's legacy. His example of servanthood outlived him. It inspired the "elders who outlived" him. They applied the leadership principles they learned from him and the nation had spiritual success.

Commentators are fond of saying that though the man of God dies, the work of God goes on. No one of us is ever indispensable. We should always be looking for those to disciple who can carry on the work:

- We should first of all be looking at home to disciple our children to know the Lord and carry on the work of serving Him.
- We should next of all be looking in the church to disciple others to continue the work of edifying the saints and evangelizing the unsaved.

Joshua wrote this book but obviously not this final chapter. Someone else, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote exactly what God intended to be written.

The writer included an important historical footnote.

Joshua 24:32 The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

The patriarch Joseph had instructed Israel to not leave his body in Egypt but to bury him in the Promised Land. Almost four hundred years later, during the exodus, they carried out his bones. Then after another forty years of wandering they brought Joseph's remains in to the Promised Land and buried him.

Joseph had a faith that inspired others. Even though it would be centuries before Israel entered their land he insisted he would one day be buried there. When he was, what a moment that must have been in the annals of God's faithfulness!

Joseph had risen to be second in command of the world's most powerful empire. But his heart was in a little plot of land in Canaan because God had promised it to him. Nothing the world could offer ever really distracted him from God:

- Not the hatred of his own brothers who wanted to kill him for being spiritual and settled for selling him into slavery.
- Not a beautiful and powerful woman who wanted him to commit adultery and had him imprisoned for refusing.
- Not being forgotten by the Pharaoh's servant after he prophesied he'd be set free.
- Not all the wealth and power of Egypt once elevated to be Pharaoh's steward.

Joseph's life is one long inspirational tale. We're inspired by him to believe that all things really do work together for the good. We're inspired by him to look beyond this world and this life to a city whose builder and maker is God. Etc., etc., etc.

Again we see that the servant of the Lord has a tough road from the world's point of view. If you don't know the end of Joseph's tale you think him a

fool for following God. But when you turn the page and see how God meant it all for good you practically jump out of your seat.

As a servant you will often be waiting for God to turn the page. Wait and go on waiting. Don't give up; don't take matters into your own hands. Look past your circumstances and the people and unto the Lord. Serve Him.

After all, you've read the end already. You know Jesus is in Heaven building your mansion. He's promised to return for you. You might die and be resurrected at His coming. You might be among those who never die and be raptured at His coming. Either way you will always be with Him.

In the end, if you are eulogized, you'll want to be described as "the servant of the Lord." You don't want someone to lean over and say, "Go up there and take a look in the coffin and see if that's really" you!

Let Joshua and Joseph and all the other men and women of faith inspire you to serve the Lord.

There's another burial in our text but one that emphasizes the effects of inspiration on the living.

#2 The Faith Of Your Fathers Extends You An Invitation (v33)

Eleazar was high priest of Israel during Joshua's tenure as commander-in-chief. He was the third son of Aaron. After the death of his brothers Nadab and Abihu he was appointed to the charge of the sanctuary. On Mount Hor he was clothed with the sacred garments, which Moses took from off his brother Aaron and put upon him as successor to his father in the high priest's office. He assisted at the inauguration of Joshua. He assisted in the distribution of the land after the conquest.

The highlight here is not Eleazar or his burial. It is his son, Phinehas.

Joshua 24:33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill belonging to Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

We've talked about Phinehas before:

- While yet a youth he distinguished himself at Shittim by his zeal against the immorality into which the Moabites had tempted the people, and thus "stayed the plague" that had broken out among the people, and by which twenty-four thousand of them perished.
- He afterwards commanded the army that went out against the Midianites.
- When representatives of the people were sent to interview with the two and a half tribes who, just after crossing Jordan, built an altar and departed without giving any explanation, Phinehas was their leader.
- Phinehas was afterwards (in the Book of Judges) the chief adviser in the war with the Benjamites.
- He is commemorated by name in Psalm 106:30-31.

Phinehas was a true "go-to guy." Whatever was going on, especially if it was really important, he was in the middle of it.

I suggest that while inspiration is important we must also take up the invitation and be servants.

I want to be God's "go-to guy." **You** want to be God's "go-to guy" or "gal." It's in our spiritual DNA, as it were. Once saved you want to serve.

Go-to guys and gals need first to resolve in their hearts the things we listed when talking about Joshua and Joseph. The detours; the discouragements; the dilemmas. All those kinds of things need to be put in perspective as you look beyond them to the Lord.

Then you need to engage. You need to make yourself available for whatever needs to be done. Not necessarily what you might want to do, but what needs to be done.

Phinehas started out as an executioner! He took a javelin and ran it through an Israelite man and a Moabite woman. It needed to be done and he did it with zeal.

It makes me ask myself things like, Am I really willing to do what needs doing? And when I do it, how's my execution?

Phinehas led a battle. He distinguished himself as a leader of soldiers.

It makes me ask myself things like, Am I zealous to overcome the enemies of God?

Phinehas led a mediation. His strong words interviewing the two and one half tribes averted a civil war.

It makes me ask myself things like, Can I be bold when it's necessary and say what is called for in order to truly help others?

Phinehas was an adviser. It makes me ask myself things like, Am I willing and able to give the advice and counsel that a person really needs?

Phinehas expands our understanding of what it means to be a servant. I need to be in a state of spiritual readiness to do whatever needs to be done.

Readiness is important. I've often used the example of emergency services personnel. When you dial 911, you need men and women who are ready to respond. If you are a first responder but off-duty, you can slack a little.

In the Christian life there is no off-duty! At least that is how we must approach serving the Lord. I am to be ready in season and out of season, 24/7, to respond to my Lord.

Then I must believe I can respond to whatever needs doing as I rely upon the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is He who takes mere guys and gals and elevates us to Phinehas' who can respond as needed.

The Book of Joshua is a long invitation to engage as the Lord's servant. Not just in serving the Lord, but in being His servant.

Live in such a way that being a servant is your eulogy and your legacy.