

## Jesus our Joshua (10)

**Hold On** Joshua 23:1-16.

**“Hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.” (v:8)**

Jesus said, **“But take courage; I have conquered/overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NRSV).**

Chapters 12 to 24 of Joshua are largely devoted to the division of the territory among the tribes of Israel. Joshua, now facing death warns the tribes as Moses had done of the results of idolatry and compromise. (Deut 31) Israel was facing the future on its own. Joshua reminded them to keep the law of the Lord, the instructions that Joshua himself had followed all those years. He sought to do God’s will as proclaimed by Moses and he had successfully brought Israel into the land of rest. So here again Joshua confronts Israel with the choice of **servicing the living God or the pagan gods** of their ancestors and Canaan.

People were to make a very important choice. (Joshua 23:8, 24:14-15) What gods are people seduced by today? (*While this world is not our home how are Christian compromised today by the gods of money, position, pleasure? **Underline how many times the word ‘courage’ is mentioned in Joshua Chapter 1***)

Like Joshua, Paul had faithfully upheld and preached the good news (2 Tim. 4:7) Now as a prisoner he was facing martyrdom. Heretics appeared to be on the increase. Bishop Moule has said, *“Christianity—was trembling, humanly speaking, on the verge of annihilation. Who would do battle for the truth? Timothy was prone to illness and timidity but he had a concern for the churches. So like Joshua, Paul pleaded for Timothy to guard what had been entrusted to him.”* (1 Tim 6:20)

The story of Joshua is prophetic in that it claims what was promised was being fulfilled. The land however was far from conquered. The lure of strange gods and mixed marriages remained (24: 1-14, 16-25 ) The Covenant was renewed but the book of Judges described compromise. *Every man did what was right in their own eyes.* (Judges.17:6)

Here there is a contemporary significance. While the faith of the Uniting Church in 1977 was grounded in its Basis of Union as a source of direction and renewal, in adopting **‘two doctrines of marriage’** that are actually mutually exclusive it has sold out to a soft-left political correctness and social acceptability. Rev Robert Griffith has said, *“I am afraid we have taken ‘diversity’ and ‘tolerance’ to such an extreme now that even the most basic of Christian truths have become negotiable or have already been replaced by a ‘new gospel’ which is really no gospel at all.”* (Gal. 1:6-8)

Like the story of the Church, Israel, blessed with the Land of Promise, would fail time and time again to respond with loyalty and obedience to the goodness of God. They would throw away a rich, full heritage of life. The writer of Hebrews saw their first obedience as only a temporary rest, a foreshadowing of the rest through Christ that awaits the People of God (Heb. 4: 8-9).

Joshua was telling God's people to imitate him, to submit to God's instruction. When Christ gave his disciples the Word of the Father (John 17:14) he was teaching them to imitate Him: to submit their lives to the Word of God knowing their future depended on it. They would face tribulation but by the staying power of the Holy Spirit, God's Word was with them and is with us to the end of the age. **The promise is not for ease but for ultimate victory.** Jesus said, *"I have overcome the world."* We grow in adversity, so we are told to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim. 2:3)

Like Timothy the next generation face the pressure of hostile public opinion. We are tempted to conform to the spirit of the age. Like Timothy we are called to guard the Gospel and to hand it to others. John Stott has said, *"All around us we see Christian churches relaxing their grasp of the gospel. A new generation of young Timothy's is needed who will guard the sacred deposit of the gospel."* *"Guard the Gospel"* 1973, p22)

### **Reflection:**

(1) To depend on Christ rather than our own efforts results in an inner rest from weariness, sorrow and sin. Like Canaan however this is only partial / a temporary rest. How do we actually live in anticipation of the future eternal rest of the new creation? (Heb. 4: 8-11)

(2) Christians in Western society are increasingly accused of hate speech if they question the idea of gender fluidity and the 50-gender options people can choose. In July 2017 General Synod of The Church of England passed a resolution in favour of creating specially designed 'baptism-like' liturgies to welcome those who had undergone gender transitioning under their new identity. Has the church fallen captive to the same sex LGBT activist agenda? *'Death of Western Christianity'*, Patrick Sookhdeo, 2017, p110.

(3) Tempted to conform to the spirit of the age, Timothy was instructed to **"Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us."** (1 Tim 1:14) The NEB says, *'the treasure put into your charge'*—deposited for safe keeping within the church. According to the verse how might this be done? How do we walk in the Spirit? (Col 2: 6-8)

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