

DON'T PUT GOD ASIDE

Joshua 23:1-16 Key verse 11

Introduction: When the rush and hurry is over we tend to put everything in "neutral" and coast for awhile. If we are not careful we will do the same thing with God. It happens so quietly, so slowly, so innocently that we don't realize that we have actually put God aside also.

Joshua sensed that Israel had become slack and their attention was not focused on God anymore. He had a tribe meeting and gave them some principles they needed to follow if they wished to hold on to the land that had been given to them by God. He told them that God had more for them if they would keep Him in the center of their thoughts and actions. What Joshua told Israel applies to any child of God even today of that child of God wants to continue to receive God's care, protection and blessings.

I. IT'S CRITICAL NOT TO BACK AWAY FROM GOD, NO MATTER WHAT

1. Although Israel had moved into their promised land, there were still seven (7) former nations of the land that had not been removed and if they were allowed to remain, their presence would eventually lead to mixed marriages, false worship and a drifting away from God would result.
2. Paul gave a warning to Church leaders in *Acts 20:28-31* about being careful to watch over God's flock for there was always danger from the outside.
3. There is no level in Christian maturity or experience or years of age where any Christian may attain that which would prevent him/her from turning aside from the divine light he/she has gained. At any stage in life a Christian can throw away all the gathered spiritual experiences in his/her life, even in the last years of one's life.
4. Do you remember promises you made to God that you have not fulfilled yet? Has there been a time that you put God aside? You walked away from Him? What about right now?
5. Just when in life do things become easier? In youth? Middle age? Old age? It is a fact that the older one becomes, the harder the battle. There is danger everyday in the life of the believer in putting God aside, drawing away from Him.

II. PUTTING GOD ASIDE HAS IT'S INEVITABLE RESULTS

1. When we put God aside one of the first things that begins to happen is defeat. (*Joshua 23:13*)
- When a child of God backs away from God, God withdraws His power and without God's power in the Christian's life, there will be defeat every day.
2. Another thing that happens is discomfort. (*Joshua 23:13*)
- Failure to rid the land of all the enemy, pressing on, following God, but sharing the land with the enemy as Israel did, will result in desperate discomfort.

- When sin is not driven out of the believer's life, when temptation is pampered, excused, encouraged and indulged, it becomes a "thorn in the side." That believer is not a happy person at all.
3. A third thing that happens when God is put aside is disgrace. (*Joshua 23:16*)
- It brings dishonor to the name of Jesus Christ, disgrace to His Church and to the believer who has put God aside.

III. STEPS TO GUARD AGAINST PUTTING GOD ASIDE

1. The first step is obedience. (*Joshua 23:6*)
 - The Christian has God's Word and believes it but does he/she obey it's words? The Christian believes the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but does he/she live in the light of the teachings of God's Word every day?
 - There is prayer. Does the Christian pray regularly? Failure to obey causes the Christian to put aside Bible study and prayer.
2. A second step is separation. (*Joshua 23:7-8*)
 - Some need to stop "playing" Christian and get down to the battle against sin and Satan.
 - Separation means NO COMPROMISE AT ALL with Satan and the world.
 - It doesn't take long at all for a little bit of slackness to cause separation from God.
3. A third step is to love the Lord sincerely. (*Joshua 23:11*)
 - Going away from God can always be traced back to failure to love the Lord sincerely.
 - Carelessness, neglect in praying, reading the Bible or walking daily with the Lord can all be traced back to a heart that does not love the Lord sincerely.
 - Jesus asked Peter one day, "*...lovest me more than these...?*"

CONCLUSION:

1. Every child of God battles every moment of his/her life with sin, Satan and the world. If the Christian yields anywhere, anytime, even for the slightest moment, separation from God will happen. The enemy must be totally removed from the believer's life (land) of blessing.
2. The greatest step in guarding against going away from God is LOVE! Love for Jesus, Love for His Church.
3. Again Israel is our example. They allowed the enemy to remain and in time Israel intermarried with the enemy, accepted their gods and in doing so, put God aside and therefore God let them go their own way. Let's not be like Israel. Let's take Joshua's advice. Stay with God!