

the Holy Spirit, and through biblical preaching. When God speaks to you in this way, obey Him. Do not make excuses. Pray like the Psalmist in (Psalms 86:11) "*Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.*"

- 2) If you are still living at home, one of the ways for you to obey God is to obey your parents as He commands. (Colossians 3:20) "*Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*"

### 3. Promise God that with His help you will be faithful to these decisions

*Joshua challenged Israel to make a covenant that they would follow through with their decision to clean their hearts, serve and obey the LORD.*

#### a. A covenant is a solemn promise.

- 1) It is a specific promise.
- 2) It is a serious promise.
- 3) It is a determined promise.
- 4) A covenant has no loopholes or exits.

#### b. A covenant promise to God is for our good

- 1) Promising God gives determination when the devil tempts us to quit. Say, "With God's help I will keep my word!"
- 2) Promising God gives a constant reminder.
- 3) Some fear to promise God because they know their weaknesses. Yes, we are weak, but God is strong enough to help us. Trust God to give you the ability to do His will.
- 4) If you should stumble, get up and press on with increased conviction. Never quit!

**Conclusion:** You **can** have a great New Year spiritually. The choice is up to you. Choose to cleanse your heart, draw near to God, serve Him faithfully and obey His voice. Then promise to do as you have decided, with God's help. Stop making excuses. Move on for God. God wants you to grow spiritually. Yield to Him today.

If you are not yet a Christian, today is the day of salvation. Admit your guilt and trust Christ to clean your soul and save you today. Begin the New Year as a Christian!

**Song:** Burdens Are Lifted - 218

# Preparing for a Great New Year

30 December 2018 – Joshua 24:22-25 – Scott Childs

**Introduction:** When God gave Israel the land that they now possess, He used Joshua and the armies of Israel to defeat the wicked people who had lived in the land. This may have taken them as much as seven years to accomplish. Here in the book of Joshua chapter 24, Joshua was now preparing the people for settling in the Promised Land. In verses 1-13, Joshua briefly reviewed how God had cared for them since the days of Abraham, centuries earlier. Joshua chose to follow God and he charged them to do the same, verses 14-15. Joshua questioned their loyalty to God, but they insisted that they would be true (vs. 16-22). With this, Joshua gave three charges to the people.

- Cleanse your hearts and incline them unto the LORD (Jos 24:23)
- Choose to serve the Lord and obey His voice (Jos 24:24)
- Covenant that you will fulfil your choice (Jos 24:25)

You and I can have a GREAT a New Year if we will wisely obey the same three charges that Joshua gave to Israel.

**Transition:** Here are the three challenges for us today: 1) Clean your heart and draw near to God. 2) Choose to serve and obey the Lord. 3) Promise God that with His help you will be faithful to these decisions.

## 1. Clean your heart and draw near to God

*For Israel, this meant putting away all false gods and inclining their hearts unto the LORD (v.23).*

### a. If you are a Christian, begin the year with a clean heart

- 1) Start by examining your heart. Like the Psalmist, ask God to search your heart. (Psalms 139:23-24) "*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"
- 2) Ask yourself tough questions like: Do I need to seek forgiveness for hurting my spouse/parent/others? Do I need to forgive someone who hurt me? Am I bitter toward anyone? Do I have a sinful habit I need to quit? Have my thoughts been pleasing to God? Has my selfishness or pride been hurting my walk with God? Do I

truly have a flourishing relationship with God?

- 3) Deal biblically with any unconfessed sin you discover or God reveals. (Proverbs 28:13) "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*" (1 John 1:9) "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Let God clean your heart.

**b. If you are not yet a Christian, start with that need.**

- 1) For you cleaning your heart and drawing near to God must start at the beginning. You must trust Christ to cleanse and save your soul.
- 2) Jesus died in your place to rescue you from the road to hell. He wants to forgive your sin and give you eternal life and a home in heaven. If the Holy Spirit is prompting you to do this, wait no longer. Repent of your sin and trust Jesus today (Acts 3:19). Repent ye therefore and be converted ...
- 3) If you will place your faith in Christ to save you from hell and give you eternal life in heaven, He promises to give you a clean heart.
  - a) (1 Corinthians 6:11) "*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*"
  - b) (Titus 3:5) "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*"
  - c) (2 Corinthians 5:17) "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*"
- 4) If this is your need, let Christ clean your heart today!

## 2. Choose to serve and obey the Lord

*For Israel, this mean serving the LORD and obeying all that He told them to do. It is much the same for us today. Serving and obeying are closely related.*

**a. We are to serve the Lord.**

- 1) To serve the Lord is to work for Him and to live for Him. We are to do all that He asks us to do.
- 2) Here are a few ways we can serve the Lord.

- a) We serve God when we love others (Jn 15:12). This is my commandment that ye love... Love is giving ourselves to meet the needs of others. This begins with loving your spouse. Serving God is humbly serving your spouse.
- b) We serve God when we daily study the Bible. If you struggle with this, here are some tips to help you.
  - (1) **Desire** – Ask God for a desire to study the Bible. Study to learn.
  - (2) **Discipline** – Make Bible reading a priority every day. Set a time and place and do it.
  - (3) **Direction** – Follow a reading schedule.
  - (4) **Dig** – Take time to dig as you read. Look up words. Read cross references. Take notes. Write down questions you have.
  - (5) **Digest** – Ponder over what you read. Write down a principle you learned. Think about it.
  - (6) **Discuss** – Share what you learn with your spouse, family, and friends.
- c) Fellowship with God in prayer every day. The Psalmist and Daniel prayed three times daily (Ps 55:17; Dan 6:10). God challenges us to pray without ceasing [frequently taking to God] (1Th 5:17).
- d) Serve God by living a godly life for God's glory. (1 Corinthians 10:31) "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" Test things before you do them. (1 Thess. 5:21-22) "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.*"
- e) We also serve the Lord by faithfully attending church. If you do not attend **all three services** of our church, I challenge you to begin this year (Hebrews 10:25). They are for your spiritual benefit.
- f) Witness for the Lord. If the Lord has saved you, you can tell others how you were saved (Act 1:8). But ye ...

**b. We are to obey the Lord's voice.**

- 1) God does not speak to us in an audible voice. Instead, He speaks to us through the Bible, through the conviction of