



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Joshua 24:16-23

Winter 2021

"Incline To Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are continuing our studies in the Book of Joshua and also concluding them this morning. We're finishing up this great book with Joshua 24, verses 16 through 33. I'm going to read all of the verses. We're in the middle of this sermon that Joshua preached. And he has given some challenges to the people; and he has told them to put away the idols that they were carrying. Whether they did it or not, he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." That's where we concluded last week, and so we pick up with verse 16,

<sup>16</sup>The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup>for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. <sup>18</sup>The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."

<sup>19</sup>Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

<sup>20</sup>If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good for you." <sup>21</sup>The people said to Joshua, "No, but we

will serve the LORD." <sup>22</sup> Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him." And they said, "We are witnesses." <sup>23</sup> "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." <sup>24</sup> The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice." <sup>25</sup> So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. <sup>26</sup> And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. <sup>27</sup> Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God." <sup>28</sup> Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.

<sup>29</sup> It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred ten years old. <sup>30</sup> And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mt. Gaash.

<sup>31</sup> Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

<sup>32</sup> Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons. <sup>33</sup> And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

Joshua 24: 16-33

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in this book together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, what a privilege it is again to be with Your people and a wonderful thing to be able to gather together as we are doing increasingly and sing hymns of praise to You as we did with that great hymn of the faith. And read the Scriptures together, consider the meaning together—and do this, coming boldly to the throne of grace and seek Your help in time of need. —And we do that, LORD; we ask you to bless us as we do this very important thing, which is to study Your Word together, and to consider the meaning of the text—to contemplate these great exhortations and warnings that Joshua gave to the people of Israel, to notice their response and to ask ourselves, ‘Are we of the same mind? Are we going to serve You or the things in our lives, like those idols that were in theirs?’

If they are, Father, and no doubt there are, for we all accumulate ideas and desires and practices that we need to put aside, because they take away from You. They may be good things, they may be neutral things, and sometimes they may be very bad things. But regardless, LORD, if they take away from You and our interest in You and our service of You, they must be put aside. And so Father, encourage us to do that. Encourage us to be the kind of people that Joshua was exhorting Israel to be. May we be Your servants and serve You faithfully and joyfully.

Father, that's our spiritual concern this morning, but we have material concerns as well. And so LORD, we pray that You would bless and that You would give healing where it is needed. We thank You that some of those who were sick are back with us, and are healthy. And we pray that You would bless those among us that are vulnerable, and pray that You would watch over them, protect them.

LORD, we thank You for the hope that we have. We learn of the death of husbands and wives and mothers, and it should cause us to reflect upon the future. We do that as we study this text, and reflect upon what Israel, going to its inheritance, really, pictures for us—the inheritance that's ours. And we give You thanks, LORD, that our future in Christ is certain and it's glorious. And that should give us perspective on how we live this life in this world. And so we pray, LORD, that You would give us that

perspective, give us a desire to know You better, and to serve You more faithfully. And we look to You to do that in this hour. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Samuel Rutherford was a Scot, and one of the most important theologians of the 17th century. He's famous for his letters, and turns of phrases, and statements like, "Grace grows best in winter." Another statement he made that summarizes well the Christian life from its beginning to its end is, "The least faith doth justify, but the gospel requireth a growth in faith." If we get the 17th century off so that it sounds a little less formal; "The least faith justifies, but the gospels requires a growth in faith." God doesn't require large, bold faith for salvation. The smallest, weakest faith is sufficient. But that faith won't remain small. It will grow. —It must.

But growth is always difficult. People falter. There's nothing sadder than a Christian who vacillates and doesn't grow—whose growth is stunted. We see that. We see it in our own experience. The apostles did, for it was true in the early church. And Paul criticized the Corinthians for that. So did the author of the Book of Hebrews. He did the same for those to whom he wrote, 'You're drinking milk when you should be eating solid food. You ought to be teachers, but you need to be taught the elementary things. You're regressing, not progressing.' (Heb 5:12-15).

Spiritual growth isn't optional. But sometimes growth requires prodding, some criticism and correction, like that which Paul gave to the Corinthians. It's what Joshua gave to Israel. He wanted them to grow in faith, to "...fear the LORD and serve Him..." He said that in the first part of his sermon, recorded here in Joshua 24 verse 14, the last sermon he gave—his farewell discourse. Now, in the last half of the sermon, he tells them to "incline your hearts to the LORD", (vs23). In fact, they would never serve the LORD well until, 'they first inclined their hearts to Him.' That's the message here.

But like the apostles, to preach that message he had to get serious with them, he had to be stern with them. We saw that in the first half of this sermon. We see it even more in the last half of it. The scene of this was Shechem, a site with a rich history for Israel. It's the first location that Abraham and Sarah came to, when they entered the

land of Canaan in Genesis 12, verse 6. The verse states, "Now the Canaanite was in the land then." It was owned and ruled by the Canaanites, by a pagan people. But the LORD appeared to Abraham, and He said to him, "To your descendants I will give this land.", (vs7). So Abraham built an altar to the LORD there at Shechem. It's the first place in Canaan where he built an altar and worshiped the LORD.

Now, centuries later, the nation has regathered at Shechem, where God made that promise to Abraham and He had kept it. —He had given Canaan to his descendants; to Abraham's descendants. He is faithful to all of His promises. So the nation had every reason to love the LORD, to be faithful to the LORD, and to serve Him. But they had a major problem. Joshua exposed it earlier—they had a divided heart—they possessed idols. Amazing! But it's a reminder that the influence of the world on God's people is real. The influence of the world on us is constant and strong. It is hard to resist. We're always in danger of being conformed to the world and its ways. Joshua knew that, and so he told them to get rid of the idols. "...put away the gods," he said. But whether they did that or didn't do that, he told them in verse 15, 'He and his household would serve the LORD.'

Now that got a response from the people in verses 16 and 17. And it's a good response. They said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods." They seemed to have meant it when they said that. In verses 17 and 18, they expressed their gratitude for all that the LORD had done for them. Joshua had reminded them earlier in the sermon of God's blessings on them—their deliverance from Egypt, their victories over the Amorites and the Canaanites, their great inheritance there in Canaan. And they acknowledged all of that and they rejected any idea of forsaking Him for false gods. They joined Joshua in his pledge of faithfulness, "We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God." (vs18). It was the right response and given, it seems, from the right motivation—a motivation of gratitude and love for the LORD and for what He had done for them. It's the response that you would hope to hear from a congregation —what you would have hoped to have heard from that congregation.

But instead of getting Joshua's approval, they got his correction. Verse 19. "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God, He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins." Now Joshua didn't simply say, 'You will not serve the LORD.' He was more forceful than that. He said, 'You are not able to serve the LORD. You don't have the spiritual ability to do that!' Now that's an arresting statement as you think about it. In fact, a couple of commentators called that statement a deep paradox. One called it, "Perhaps the most shocking statement in the Old Testament."

Well I would hardly call it that, but then I suspect, like the British monk Pelagius, they might have a difficult time with Augustine's prayer and his *Confessions*. Do you remember it? We considered it last week, "All my hope is found solely in Your exceeding great mercy. Give what You command, and command what You will."

What that means, if you remember from last week, is we're completely dependent on His mercy for every good and right thing that we do. You can command whatever You are pleased to command, but we are not able to do anything that pleases You, or be obedient, unless You give us the ability—give us faith and obedience—then we will obey. It's like Jeremiah 31, verse 18, "...turn thou me, and I will be turned... O LORD."

Well that all goes completely contrary to human nature and man's view of himself—but it is found throughout the Bible. Augustine was completely biblical and so was Joshua; 'You are not able. You must first be turned.' Well, so what were they to do? The only thing that they could do, the only thing that one can do, the thing that Augustine did—throw ourselves on the mercy of God and He will give ability for obedience.

And that's Joshua's meaning. Joshua wasn't being fatalistic here, as though he were saying, 'There is no way and there's no hope. Just give up.' Just the opposite. After all, Joshua was serving the LORD. —But he had seen people's confidence in the past turn to failure. He was with the previous generation at Mt. Sinai when they vowed to keep the law. "All the people said with one voice, 'All the words which the LORD has spoken,

we will do.' " Well that was the right thing to say, wasn't it? But they didn't do it. —They couldn't do it.

And that's exactly what the Law proves. Paul states that in Romans chapter 3, verse 20 and in Romans chapter 5, verse 20, 'For through the law comes the knowledge of sin.' That's its main purpose, to expose the sin that is in us. In fact, as Paul goes on to say, 'it stirs sin up'. It agitates our condition.

Joshua had seen his countrymen's failure to keep the Law. He also knew that the people who vowed not to forsake the LORD to serve other gods were, in fact, at that moment, carrying idols. So he tells them here of their inadequacy—not to discourage them from following the LORD, but in fact, to encourage them to look to the LORD, so that they could follow him, by His mercy.

The life of obedience is a serious life. Joshua reminds them of that. "The LORD," he said, "is a holy God. He is a jealous God." (vs19). He is perfect. He is sinless. John wrote, in 1 John chapter 1, verse 5, "...that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." He is holy.

And He is jealous. Not envious, of course, but He will not share His glory with other gods—all of which are false gods—dumb gods. They are no gods at all, just imaginary gods. That's right out of the Law. That's the second of the Ten commandments, the law against making an idol, (Exodus chapter 20, verse 5).

Joshua must have been thinking of those gods that they were carrying with them. So he reminds them of what God's holiness means, "...He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins." He does forgive, but not when people resist His will and persist in their sin, and harden themselves against Him. And they had a divided heart. They needed to know that and turn from it. Their resolution to serve the LORD was worthless unless they realized their failure and inability—and looked to the LORD God for grace.

If they did not, Joshua warned in verse 20, 'The LORD would consume them, even after all of the good that He had done for them.' Life with the LORD is serious. We hold firmly to the statement that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ

alone. I was in Mark's class this morning, and he recited that same point and said that it needs to be restated, and stated frequently. And it does. We believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. —It is not by works!

But salvation produces works. It produces good deeds. And there will be growth in faith. Where there is not, when a child of God is being conformed to the world instead of being transformed into the likeness of Christ, there will be correction in word, for certain, and sometimes that correction will be through divine discipline—difficulty—but always, always for our good. Then there is with some, a presumptuousness about grace, a careless attitude that shows indifference to holiness. Peter's words apply to them, "Make your calling and election sure." The elect are fruitful.

Now, having said that, it needs to be said also that saints stumble, saints drift spiritually. They sin and they fall into worldliness. I think almost all of the letters that were written in the New Testament, and most every one of Paul's letters, were written to correct some error. That was the occasion for them. And so that's needed because Christians drift, Christians stumble, Christians fail. We will never reach perfection this side of heaven. So, we need correction, and we need encouragement continually.

Joshua had given Israel correction. And again, the people responded. They pushed back a bit. They said, "No, but we will serve the LORD." (vs23). And I don't doubt that they said that with great sincerity and with complete confidence. Joshua now, didn't challenge them, but again, he warned them in verse 22 that they were "witnesses against themselves", and immediately they answered in verse 22, "We are witnesses." So they understand mistakes, they understand where they put themselves and what was expected of them.

So, in verse 23, Joshua spoke for a fourth and final time, and here he comes to the point of his sermon again. This is what he had been moving toward when he made the point in verse 14, and now here in verse 23 he states it again. This is really the lesson that he is bringing to them for a second time; "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." And the people agreed, "We will serve the LORD our God and will obey His voice." (vs24).

But regardless of one's commitment to do that, the only way a person can or will do that is found in those words, "Incline your hearts to the LORD." It indicates the attitude of commitment. It indicates the attitude of one who rejects all others but the LORD.

Interestingly, ominously, that same word, (*hatah*), was used of Solomon in 1 Kings 11:3, of his heart being 'turned' or 'inclined' to other gods by his foreign wives. It is a notorious conclusion to the life of Solomon and what occurred in his old age. And so you read that, and you have to pause. If the wisest man of the age could fail like that, could be swayed into such egregious sin as that—then we should never think that we are safe from the subtle, evil influence of the world. That's the influence Joshua wanted the nation to resist, the attitude and behavior he wanted them to turn from. It's what the people of Ephesus did, when they were converted.

Luke records that in Acts chapter 19, verse 19, how at first they piled up their books on magic and the occult, and they burned them—50,000 pieces of silver worth of books and stuff—it was a bonfire of the vanities. They turned decisively from the old life to the new life; it was what every convert to the LORD must do. But 30-40 years later, it was that same church in Ephesus, a great church that had been so committed to the LORD, that Jesus rebuked in Revelation chapter 2, verse 4, "You have left your first love." So He said, "Remember from where you have fallen."

Solomon failed. The Ephesians failed. We, too, can easily grow cold. —We need to incline our hearts to the LORD daily. Remember Him daily. The world never ceases its pressure to conform us to its image. So we can never stop inclining our hearts to the LORD, never stop studying His Word, and seeking Him in prayer, and growing in faith.

The people had now vowed their loyalty to the LORD three times. Joshua was satisfied—or he knew that he'd done all that he could with the warnings and the encouragement that he gave. So verse 25 states, He "made a covenant with the people that day..." The meaning of that statement, "made a covenant," is probably that he renewed the covenant that they had made at Sinai. In verse 26 he wrote down their

agreement "...in the book of the law....", then he set up a large stone and in verse 27 Joshua called it "a witness".

Putting up stones like this was not an unusual practice. We read of it all through the Old Testament. We read about it, for example, in the Book of Exodus. Jacob, for example, set up a stone, a pillar, in Bethel, after his dream, when he saw a ladder to heaven. Here Joshua says the stone, "...has heard all the words of the LORD, which He spoke to us..." —and it would be a witness against the people if they forsook the covenant and they denied the LORD.

Now he was speaking here figuratively, not literally, any more than the psalmist was speaking literally in Psalm 98, verse 8, where he wrote of 'rivers clapping their hands and mountains singing for joy'. This rock that he set up would speak to them by way of remembrance. It stood as a monument to remind the people of their vow to the LORD to be faithful and to serve Him. So as they saw it, it was as though the remembrance of that was speaking to them.

It was intended to motivate the people to act in loyalty to the LORD, to be faithful men and women, to keep them on track. As they saw that, that remembrance would bring them in their minds to this moment that they were to be faithful and recall that. And they needed that. Canaan was filled with these stone monuments that were reminders. We've seen that throughout this Book of Joshua.

And we have something similar to that in the Christian faith as well. We don't have stone monuments or things of a tangible nature like that, but what we do have is baptism and we have the LORD's Supper. They are given to us to remind us of great truth. Baptism reminds us of our new birth. The new birth happens only once. It's permanent. It's not repeated. We're not 'born again' more than one time. We're born again once and for all. We're placed in Christ. We can never be removed. And so baptism occurs only once in a person's life. We don't repeat it.

Now the LORD's Supper is different. The LORD's Supper reminds us of what Christ has done: That He has redeemed us, that we are spiritually in Him, and we live spiritually

by Him. We constantly live off His life. He is continually supplying us with that. We need that vital connection with Him continually. And so the LORD's Supper is something that we repeat weekly.

Well these things are tools, as it were; they are only reminders. —They don't impart grace. Only the LORD does that. In John, chapter 1, verse 14, John spoke of Jesus as being “full of grace and truth”. That's where grace and truth are, “in Him”, not in the elements here, not in the water of baptism. And so again, to live faithfully, to grow in faith, we need to actively incline our hearts to Him—to look to the LORD. The LORD uses various means to produce that in us. And the faithful heed the reminders and warnings. ‘Those with ears to hear respond’; that was Joshua's purpose in all of this.

Then following the sermon and ceremony, Joshua dismissed the people. And we read in verse 28 that he dismissed “each to his inheritance”. And that, again, is a testimony in this book to God's faithfulness to the people. The inheritance promised to them, way back in Genesis chapter 12, (hundreds of years earlier, when Abraham first came to Canaan, came to Shechem), was fulfilled. The LORD had given them their inheritance.

And we're again reminded of that here; reminded that the LORD is faithful and the LORD is reliable. —And He's reliable and faithful to us as well. We can transfer this inheritance they went into, (whether it was to Ephraim or to Manasseh, down to Judah and Benjamin), as a picture of us and the inheritance we have with the LORD in heaven forever. The LORD is reliable.

Now He usually proves Himself reliable and accomplishes His purpose my means of providence or through the agency of faithful men. Joshua, by God's grace, was a faithful man to the end. And in verses 29 through 30 his end is recorded with a very brief summary of his life, "It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred ten years old. And they buried him in the

territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of Mt. Gaash."

Many have noticed the similarity between the death and burial of Joshua and that of Moses, at the end of the Book of Deuteronomy. One of the similarities is the title given to both, "servant of the LORD". That was Joshua's epitaph. Not 'brilliant general', not 'courageous leader'. "Servant of the LORD", and that's the summary of his life. He was faithful to the end. He died the "servant of the LORD." That's not a pejorative title at all—it's a glorious title. There's no greater description that can be given to one than that. It's the title of the "Greater Joshua", the LORD Jesus Christ, who was faithful unto death. He's the "Servant of the LORD" as well.

And further testimony to the faithfulness of this Joshua, the lesser Joshua, Joshua ben Nun, is given in verse 31, "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel." And I say that's a testimony to Joshua's faithfulness because they responded to this sermon that he gave, for the sermon that he gave was a hard one. It wasn't a pleasant sermon. He preached what would be unpopular but what was necessary, and he did it—and they listened to Joshua. They responded to his corrections and warnings. They recognized their inability. They looked to the LORD. They put away the gods, and they inclined their hearts to the LORD.

The book concludes with two more burials. First the burial of Joseph's bones, and then the burial of the high priest, Eleazar. Joseph was buried there in Shechem. His last request before he died in Egypt was, "...carry my bones up from here." That's how the Book of Genesis ends. Joseph died in Egypt but he knew his and Israel's future was not there. So he made that request. And now, after years of the sojourn in Egypt, after years of wandering in the wilderness, then of war and conquest, his bones are buried in Shechem in Ephraim—his tribal inheritance.

The book concludes at the grave of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, "...they buried him in Gibeah of Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the hill country of Ephraim."

All three of these burials are about more than about the ends of these lives. The graves are like the stone monuments set up all over the land of Canaan—the reminders that the people set up for themselves. And so too these burials are testimonies to God's faithfulness. When Joseph was on his deathbed he said, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." And he knew that because in the previous verse he recounts that God had promised the land, had promised Canaan "on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob".

And he knew that God cannot lie. He's faithful. The promises cannot fail for that very reason. They're based on God's character. God cannot lie. So, 400 years later, the LORD fulfilled His promise, and Joseph's burial was a testimony to His faithfulness. He does things in His way and His time—and He's always faithful.

It's also testimony to Joseph's faith, as were the burials of Joshua and Eleazar, that their future was there in that land—where they would be resurrected to inherit the kingdom to come. And that's the hope that we have. This world is not our home. Our future is not here in Egypt, so to speak, but in Canaan. In the promised land to come, the Canaan to come—the kingdom of God and the new heavens and new earth—"World without end."

And the conclusion of the Book of Joshua leads our thoughts to that great hope that we have. It ends well with the nation at peace and the people returning to their inheritance. After centuries of waiting and longing for their inheritance, after a long struggle, they had entered the land. —They had their possession and peace.

And that's the hope that we have. What we look forward to and what may now seem to us distant and vague, we will possess, we will possess soon. —The kingdom to come. Peace forever. —That's the perspective that we need if we are to live well, if we are to "...be transformed by the renewing of our minds..." rather than being "...conformed to this world..." as Paul warns in Romans, chapter 12, verse 2. That's the challenge that we face daily. Paul knew it was a challenge, just as Joshua did. It is so easy

to lose sight of the LORD and to begin to drift—and as we drift unwittingly, we begin to collect idols and they become a part of our life.

‘The large stone of witness’ that Joshua set up at Shechem, mentioned in verse 26, reminded me of something that I saw in Newburyport, Massachusetts, some years ago. That's where the great evangelist, George Whitfield, died, and where he is buried. In fact, he is buried under the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church there. I've seen it. I've been there. I went to the church one time, knocked on the door to see if I could get in, and the minister opened the door and let me in, and showed me around. Well, there is a large marble monument to Whitfield, a cenotaph, to the side of the pulpit. And on it are listed details of his ministry during the great awakening in the 1700s.

Whitfield has been called the greatest evangelist since the apostle Paul, and did have an amazing ministry, as you read about it. But as amazing as he was, as great as his legacy is, there are very few today in Newburyport or in that church who know anything about Whitfield, or his Gospel. That marble monument has been in the front of that church for perhaps 200 years. Somewhere, at some time, people began to drift from the truth, and they forgot. —They don't know what that thing represents. It's easy to do that.

We need to remember that. We need to remember what Joshua said to the nation when they vowed not to forsake the LORD, ‘No, you will not be able to serve the LORD.’ Not in their own strength they wouldn't. —And we need to know that; how weak our will is and how unable we are—and seek God's mercy. And He will give it. He is, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 3, "The God of all comfort." He blesses His people abundantly. He desires to do that. Joshua reminded the people of that—how from the days of Abraham to their own day, God had blessed them and given them everything that He'd promised. That's how we ignite genuine affection for the LORD and set our hearts aflame.

Correction and warnings are necessary. Joshua gave them. The apostles gave them. We need that. But the greatest motivation for faithfulness comes from grace. It comes from the knowledge of grace, the remembrance of all that the LORD has done for

us, and all that He will yet do for us. It's as we study Scripture and as we learn of His unconditional love for us, His sacrifice for us, that He will never forsake us, and that He will surely bring us safely into the promised land, it's through all of this that our hearts are inclined to Him.

Well that's the testimony of the two disciples in Luke, chapter 24, who visited with the LORD, unawares, after the resurrection. They said, after the LORD had disappeared from them and they realized that this companion of theirs on the road to Emmaus was the resurrected Christ who had been teaching them the Scriptures, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the scriptures to us?" (vs32). That's how our hearts will incline to Christ—and that is the greatest safeguard against the world's influence. We can't lean to the world when we're inclined to the LORD. So may He give us the grace to know our weakness and to find our strength in Him.

And if there's anyone here who does not know the LORD, may He give you the grace to know that you don't; to know that you are lost and give you the desire to be found. Cry out to Him, cry out in the darkness of your heart, He will find you. Look to Him. Believe in Him with the smallest—the least of faith. It is sufficient. And He will receive you, justify you, accept you, and save you forever. And by His grace, that small faith will grow large and make you useful for Him—like Joshua, the servant of the LORD. That's something for all of us to aspire to, to be the LORD's servant. May God give us the grace to do that. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for what we have learned from this great book: Your faithfulness, Your power, that these people, this nation of former slaves, were able to conquer professional armies, great armies of the day throughout Canaan. And they did it with speed, with great power, with overwhelming force, because it was You who did it. You are the one that gave them everything they had. You gave them their victories. You

gave them their inheritance. You are a God of abundant kindness, goodness, gifts, and grace.

And we thank You, Father, that You have given us, we who have believed in Your Son, You've given us great power over the powers of this life, that we can live in Your strength, not in our own. We don't have abilities in and of ourselves, but through the ability and the strength and the power that You give, which we have by being in Christ—which we have through the Holy Spirit, You give us victory and life. And You, by Your grace, have brought us into that life, and we give You thanks and praise for that.

We're reminded of that with the Supper that is before us. And we pray, LORD, that as we take it that You would bless us, that You would help us to reflect deeply on what these elements, the bread and the wine, represent, and help us to reflect deeply upon the person and work of our Savior, the LORD Jesus Christ. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.

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