

## Self Examination

"Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the wine".  
1 Cor 11.28.

Once again, we have come to the start of a new week and the time for self-examination before remembering our Lord in the appointed way. Now, Jesus told us that where our treasure is there our heart will also be. Where has your heart been for the past six days?

As always, we can take lessons to ourselves from the history of Israel. Just consider the nation of Israel, they had been brought out of slavery in Egypt and they had seen the miracles of God. They had the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day. Their clothes did not wear out and God provided for all their needs. They ate manna, the bread of angels, they drank from the rock by the way. Yet they looked back to Egypt. They remembered the melons and cucumbers that they enjoyed and they forgot the slavery that they had endured. Why did they forget? Why did they look back? Well, because they had no faith. Paul writes in his letter to the Hebrews:

"now with whom was the angry 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Hebrews 3:17-19.

We are no different from the Israelites, we share the same weak human nature, we are prone to the same mistakes. Paul therefore warns: "beware brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." So, I ask again where has your heart been for the past week. Have you look forward to the kingdom, or have you look back at the world.

Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness, yet only two men survived the desert journey from that generation that came out of Egypt - Joshua and Caleb. Now Moses died and Joshua was commanded to take the people into the land. Yet we learn that the people needed to be circumcised! We read:

"This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised." Joshua 5:4-5.

At this time then, the people once again entered into a covenant relationship with God and God was with Joshua. Joshua of course is a type of Christ and there are many lessons we can learn from his life. We can read in Joshua chapter 1 of how Joshua was encouraged and strengthened for the task ahead:

"Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous that you may observe **to do** according to all the law which

Moses my servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right-hand or to the left that you may prosper where ever you go." Joshua 1: 6-7.

So Joshua was to be strong, courageous and obedient to the word of God. Joshua is further encouraged by knowing that the angel of the Lord was with His people. Thus in Joshua chapter 5 we read:

"And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "are you for us or for our adversaries?" so he said, "no, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, "what does my Lord say to his servant?" Joshua 5:13-14

Joshua believed and trusted in the Lord his God. He had a living faith and that faith was immediately demonstrated, we read:

"Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, pass through the camp and command the people, saying, prepare provisions for yourselves for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess." Joshua 1:10-11

Joshua also sent out two spies to view the land and especially view Jericho. Now regarding Jericho we see another example of a living and active faith in Rahab. Just consider for a few moments Rahab. She was a member of the enemy, yet rather than side with her own people she realised that God was giving their land to His people. She recognised that Israel were God's chosen people and that His hand was with them. Thus when the spies came to Jericho, Rahab took the two men and hid them. Rahab acknowledged Yahweh as being the one true God. Thus Rahab tells the men "as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."

So we see belief and faith in action. Rahab believed and then acted upon what she knew. Yet there were conditions attached to her salvation. The two men told Rahab:

"we will be blameless of this oath of yours which you made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers and your father's household into your own home. Joshua 2:17-18. Note that v19 says "it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him."

Rahab immediately acted upon her faith and obeyed the conditions laid down, as soon as the spies had left, Rahab bound the scarlet cord in the window. So we see her faith put into action, a living active faith in Rahab life. Therefore, we read "by faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe when she had received the spies with peace." Hebrews 11:31.

So what is the relevance for us? We have believed, we have put our faith in God, we have put that faith into action by accepting the waters of baptism, but for us also conditions must be met if we are to find salvation. We must remain in Christ!

We see another example of a living and active faith in Caleb. Both Joshua and Caleb were promised that they would go into the land. Both had been faithful spies bringing back of good report of the land they saw. Both had then endured travelling 40 years through the wilderness. Both because of their faith had entered into the promised land. Now Caleb said to Joshua:

“You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. I was 40 years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out of the land and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart...” “...now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as he said, these 45 years, ever since the Lord spoke of this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, 85 years old. And yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in.” Joshua 14:6-11.

For 45 years Caleb was patient in looking forward to his inheritance and at the age of 85 his faith was undiminished and his trust in God unswerving. We can maybe recall Daniels prophecy of the 1290 days, we read “blessed is the one who wait for and reaches the end of the 1335 days”. On a year for a day basis, this is a 45 year difference, the same length of time that Caleb waited for his inheritance. Caleb had no idea when he would inherit the promises, yet he waited patiently. He trusted that God would indeed fulfil all that He had said.

So then what lesson can we learn from Caleb? Well, Jesus exhorts us “therefore you also be ready: for the Son of Man coming at an hour you do not expect.” Matthew 24:44. Jesus will return, of that, there is no doubt. The Lords coming and the setting up of the kingdom will be as the advancing tide sweeping away the sandcastles of man! At that time, if like Caleb we are found faithful, then we shall enter the land of promise. Thus, Paul writes:

“But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing your labour is not in vain in the Lord. “ 1 Corinthians 15:57-58

So, we now come to the time when we must examine ourselves, what of our faith? Is our faith living and active in our lives? Our labour in the Truth most certainly will not be in vain. So can the same be said of us which Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

“we are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds towards each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.” 1 Thessalonians 1:3-4.

Our wilderness journey will soon end. The kingdom will soon be here. According to the mercy of God **we shall** enter into the promised land. Of these things there is no doubt, yet Paul writes:

“you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as the thief in the night. For when they say, “peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.:

Will it come upon us as a thief? It should not!

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and the sober.” 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6.

If we have a living and active faith in our lives then we will not be found living in darkness. Rather we will be found preparing for when the Lord returns. So, “brethren [and sisters], stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” 1 Thessalonians 2:15-17 Therefore, let us “run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”

Now I ask again:

- Where has your heart been for the past six days?
- Has your life been centred upon the things of God?
- Has the coming kingdom being in the forefront of your mind?
- Have you longed for the return of the Lord Jesus?

It is now time for self-examination and we have every encouragement to do so honestly, “for God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.” 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

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