

BUT AS FOR ME

Joshua 24:15

Introduction:

(Mention Vance Havner – a great deal borrowed from his message)

The year 1775 - the American colonies were in rebellion against Britain. While many of the learned men of the day were attempting to work out a means of peaceful co-existence with King George III, a politician by the name of Patrick Henry decided that he had had enough. In a speech to the elected assembly of Virginia he laid everything on the line by calling on the colonies to arm themselves in a revolution for freedom from England. He concluded his speech with these now famous words, "I know not what course others may take, **but as for me**, give me liberty, or give me death."

And with that verbal shot, he set a course from which there was no turning back. He had made up his mind, and he stated it clearly. There was no middle ground for Patrick Henry. While everyone else was vacillating from one side to the other in an attempt to please everyone, he made his decision and stated his position.

"But as for me..." We find that same phrase in the book of Joshua. Turn there with me to Joshua 23-24.

I. Joshua's Call for a Decision

A. A Reminder of the Past

In chapter 23 Joshua reviews briefly how God has brought them safely through the past 20 years of battle as they conquered and drove out the nations in the land of Canaan. *Read vv. 1-8, 14-16.* It was God who had done this for them. *Emphasize esp. vv. 14-16.*

B. Laying out the Options

In chapter 24, Joshua reminds the people of how God, their God, had demonstrated His power over the gods and kings and prophets of the nations around them. Review:

- the gods of Abraham's family in Ur – the Mesopotamian moon-god, Sin – also Haran
- the gods of the Egyptians – the Sun-god Ra
- the prophet Balaam and Balak of Moab
- the gods of the nations of Canaan

For decades the people had been vacillating in their worship, trying to please God while at the same time incorporating the worship of the false gods of the nations around them. Now Joshua lays out the options and then he calls for a decision.

C. Calling for a Decision

Go through verses 14- 15 - Joshua's call to decide. Make up your mind ... I'm reminded of the prophet Elijah some 500 years later as he stood before the people on Mount Carmel and he said, "How long will you waver between two opinions." Make up your mind. Make your decision and then stick to it.

Then he clearly stated his decision. **But As For Me...**

If ever there was a time when we need people who will stand with Joshua, it is this generation. We live in an age where standards of decency have, for the most part, been forgotten; where there is little distinction between the church and the world; where black and white has faded into indefinite shades of grey. In such a world we desperately need people who will say, but as for me I will serve the Lord; churches which will stand up and say, no matter what society may do or say, as for us we will be different from the world; fathers who will stand as Joshua and say, but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.

II. Paul's call for Commitment

In his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul gave some instructions, which I think would stand us in good stead if we are to make such a decision. In that letter he reminded the young preacher, Timothy, of three things that were critical to his ministry.

1. Be careful about the doctrine - 1:13-14 - *read and discuss the importance of sound teaching* - in light of today's emphasis on open-mindedness and post-modernism. In this day of fuzzy thinking when it

seems to be the height of intelligence to not be sure of anything, we need to be sure of the doctrine which we have in this book.

2. Be sure of the dynamic - the Holy Spirit. 1:6-7 - discuss the spirit of power - dynamo - in this age of extremism regarding the Holy Spirit, many times we have quenched the power, which we so desperately need to stand for the truth. "We're so afraid we might get out on a limb that we don't even get up the tree."

3. Be committed to the discipline. There is very little discipline in our world today. I know that my life is not as disciplined as it should be. Chapter 2:3-4 - read and discuss briefly.

"doctrine - believe; dynamic - burn; discipline - behave."

The Apostle Paul knew whereof he spoke. He knew from his own life and experience that, in order to influence the world for God, Timothy needed that same kind of commitment that Joshua spoke of.

And if we are going to influence our world for God, so do we.

III. Our Call to Commitment

Discuss the gods of our age, by which we are confronted. Oh, they are not idols of gold and silver, or stone and wood. They are not images before which we bow down in worship. But they are just as real as the gods of Joshua's day.

- Materialism - focus on money and possessions
- Secularism - focus on the world - no God
- Humanism - we are our own gods
- Sports, activities, recreation
- Family

What is it you are going to serve? We sit here this morning, faced with the question of our commitment and choice. Joshua said... 24:15.

Conclusion

If ever in history there was a day when we need people who will take a stand and stick to it, it is now. We need people, churches, parents, who will say, you choose who you will serve, but as for me, I'm going to serve the Lord.

In a few moments we are going to sing that old hymn that says, "I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining every day, Still praying as I'm onward bound, Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

Are you praying that prayer? Are you pressing on with a deep heart-felt desire to gaining ever more height until the day you reach the summit and see Jesus in all his glory?

➔ Illust. - "The Difference is worth the Distance" - Vance Havner

"Some time ago I was in Camp Carson in the mountains of east Tennessee, with a preacher's conference. Oh, what a spot. Every morning I climbed one of them before breakfast. I got up early... The first time I tried it, it's a hard pull, and something said, You better call a halt and settle for half way. But something else said, keep climbin'. My legs were wobblin', my heart was thumpin', and something inside said, "Who do you think you are? A teenager?"

But I made it. And when I reached the summit, I looked out over that breath-taking panorama, and I said, brethren, the difference is worth the distance. Let me say to you, keep climbin'. Some folks will only view you with contempt, and the critics will say, Get off your high horse and join the club. Tell 'em, I can't do it, boys. *'Faith has caught the joyful sound, and the song of saints on higher ground. I want to scale that utmost height and catch a gleam of glory bright.'* Anything else is out of the question.

Twenty centuries ago there lived a preacher who made this his goal. His name was Paul. When he came to the end of his life, he didn't write his memoirs in a villa on the Riviera. No, he wrote his final words from a cold Roman prison cell. At the end of his life he could say, 'I've been faithful to the faith; ...fight; ...finish. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness.' It was a hard pull, but the difference was worth the distance."

BUT AS FOR ME – Are you willing to make this the motto of your life... As you go through life you will be faced with many decisions about the life and times in which we live. But it will make a difference if you face them with your mind already made up, knowing that whatever others may do, whatever course others may take, you are going to serve the Lord.