

**Devoted – Joshua 6:6-27**  
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis  
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

If I were to ask you this morning: “To what are you devoted in your life,” what would your answer be? Think about that question for just a moment. To what are you devoted in your life? If an outside person were to passively observe the way you spend your time and energy and money, the things you think about and the conversations you have, and the way you interact with God, to what would they conclude you’re devoted? What are the things or the people or the priorities that consume most of your time and energy and thought life on a daily basis? Would they say you’re devoted to God, to your wife, to your kids, to your work, to your hobbies, maybe to your investment portfolio? Or might they say you’re devoted to your ego, your opinions, your need to be right, your need to be in control, your need to feel safe and secure, or even devoted to your sin and addictions? Like it or not, we’re all devoted to something and what we’re devoted to is best revealed in the way we spend our time and energy and money, in the things we think and talk about, and in the way we relate or don’t relate to the one true God.

Well, in our study of Scripture today, we’re going to see how what people were devoted to, as revealed in the choices they were making, caused them to be devoted by God to either life or to destruction. And as we move through our study today, I’m going to challenge you to encounter our great God as he is, even if what you see is not what may appeal to your human perspective and ideas. I’ll be honest. This was a challenging passage of Scripture to work through this week and I had to have some serious and sobering re-adjustments in my thinking in relation to the seriousness of sin and rebellion against God and to God’s unwavering and terrifying commitment to carry out justice and judgment for it on all those who reject his one path to life and forgiveness and freedom; as well as God’s unwavering love commitment to effectively discipline those of his children who are dabbling in sin and revealing through their words, priorities and actions that their true devotion lies elsewhere.

## II. REVIEW OF CONTEXT (vs. 1-5)

Turn with me in your Bibles, if you would, to Joshua chapter 6. We've already tackled the first 6 verses of this chapter, but we'll begin by reading them again to set the scene and remember where we left off. If you'll remember, Joshua has just had a face to face encounter with the Captain of the Lord's angelic armies who was standing with drawn sword near Jericho, ready to fight for the Lord's purposes. We concluded in our previous message that this was most likely an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ himself, since Joshua fell to the ground and worshipped him and was told to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. And as Joshua removes his sandals before the Captain, we pick up the account in verse 1 of chapter 6:

***1 Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. 2 The Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors. 3 "You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. 4 "Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5 "It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."***

Do you think 7 is a significant number for God? I would say so! Well, this was God's unique battle plan given directly to Joshua...a battle plan that would not be dependent on human strength and wisdom and battle skills, but would be dependent only on God's mighty power working through the humble, trusting obedience of his people.

## III. JOSHUA PASSES ON THE LORD'S BATTLE PLAN (vs. 6-10)

So how would Joshua and the people respond to this strange battle plan God had given them? Well, Joshua had walked with God long enough to not waste any time arguing with God or asking for a sign or second-guessing God's revealed plan. And the priests and the people, after that miraculous Jordan River crossing,

were also ready to trust and follow. Listen to how Joshua, the priests and the people responded to God's unique battle plan in verses 6 through 10:

***6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord." 7 Then he said to the people, "Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the Lord." 8 And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Lord went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them. 9 The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 10 But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout!"***

In Joshua, the priests and the people here, we see humble trust and obedience as they move right into action and follow God's instructions exactly. Notice that Joshua also commanded complete silence from the people during the circling of the city. The only sound to be heard until the final circling of the city on the 7<sup>th</sup> day was to be the continual blowing of the trumpets.

Now you may have to adjust the picture you have in your mind of what the Israelites experienced as they circled the city of Jericho for 7 days. Movies and books have often imagined that the people of Jericho were taunting and mocking as they marched around, but nothing in the text tells us this happened and any speaking or even shouting from the people of Jericho would likely have been drowned out by the continual, eerie blowing of the rams' horn trumpets, warning of God's impending judgment. Jericho was also completely locked up and we know the people inside were living in absolute terror of what was about to happen. Certainly they were not feeling bold and confident or they would have come out in battle formation to defend their city. So we may need to drop that idea some of us have from Veggie Tales that the people of Jericho were making fun of the Israelites and dumping slushies on their heads as they circled the city!

But one thing we can be certain of in these verses is that victory over the city of Jericho was not going to come through the battle skills and human strategies of Joshua and the Israelite army. Victory in this battle would only come through listening to the Lord's instructions, trusting him, and taking obedient action. That is how God's awesome power, strong enough to destroy the imposing wall of Jericho in an instant, would be activated and enable to Israelites to powerfully conquer the city of Jericho.

Imagine for a moment how different things would have gone had the Israelites decided to just proceed in the battle according to human wisdom based on what had worked in other battles throughout history. If they had laid up siege works against the city and tried to starve them out. Instead of entering the city after 7 days, they probably would have spent years in the process and still failed in the end. Yet how many times do we in our own lives rely on our own wisdom and plans in the battles we face? How many times do we spend large amounts of time planning and scheming and trying our best ideas about how to win, rather than devoting time to seeking the Lord and his plan for victory?...Or how many times do we just plunge into battles that God hasn't called us to fight, instead of seeking his input before going to war?

We would do well to remember that victory for us, just as for the Israelites here, also comes through first seeking the Lord's battle plan and then through trusting what he reveals to us and taking obedient action according to his plan; a plan which can often seem quite strange to us and require much humility, patience and endurance. This was definitely the case with God's battle plan here at Jericho, as the Israelites would need to circle the city 13 times over a 7 day period with blowing trumpets and no words allowed to be spoken. And yet in the end, it took much less time and was infinitely more successful than had they tried human methods of attacking a walled city.

#### **IV. SEVEN DAYS OF HUMBLE TRUST AND OBEDIENCE (vs. 11-16)**

So let's continue reading in verses 11 through 16. The battle instructions have been given, the troops and the ark are in formation, the trumpets are blowing, and now comes 7 days of marching around the city. Picking up in verse 11:

***11 So [Joshua] had the ark of the Lord taken around the city, circling it once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp. 12 Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. 13 The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them and the rear guard came after the ark of the Lord, while they continued to blow the trumpets. 14 Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; they did so for six days. 15 Then on the seventh day they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. 16 At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city.***

After 7 days of circling, as opposed to years of trying to starve out Jericho, the moment finally arrived. The priests blew a long blast and Joshua told the people to break their silence and shout with a great shout, because the Lord had certainly given them the city of Jericho. And after 7 days of continuous warnings, the day of Jericho's judgment and destruction had arrived and the time for repentance and surrender was over. God had provided abundant evidence of his existence and power to the people in Jericho, so much so that we're even told earlier in Joshua by Rahab that they all knew in their hearts that the God of the Israelites is the one living and true God. And God had even provided them with 7 extra days to think about it, to the sound of continuously blowing trumpets. But as they ignored the trumpet warnings that called for repentance, surrender and alignment with the one true God, the door of escape closed forever and all that remained was wrath and judgment.

## **V. DEVOTED TO DESTRUCTION (vs. 17-19)**

Now before the big shout that would break down the walls of Jericho and allow God's judgment and wrath to pour in, Joshua gave a few final instructions to the Israelites about the city, its people and its worldly treasures. I'm going to read verses 17 through 19 from the ESV version, because in looking at the original Hebrew, I just think the ESV does a better job expressing the true, though difficult, meaning of these verses; while the New American Standard (which I usually love) tries a little too hard to soften the meaning and I think goes too far

in trying to appeal to our modern sensibilities. My desire, and I hope yours too, is to know God as he is and not as I want him to be. I want to speak God's truth from his Word even when it shakes us up a little and challenges our human perspectives and understanding. I'm not interested in tickling ears or allowing myself to try and force my human perspective on God. So here we go.

Beginning in verse 17, Joshua gives this final instruction and warning to the armed men about to enter the city. He says:

***17 And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. 19 But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord."***

Joshua tells the people here that everything and everyone in the city of Jericho was devoted to the Lord's purposes and not to be taken by the Israelites for their own use. The silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron were to be put into the Lord's treasury. But all the men, women, children and even animals in Jericho, with the exception of one woman and her family who had responded appropriately to the one true God through faith expressed in action; all of the other living beings were devoted by the Lord to destruction. The time allotted for repentance and faith was over, and all that remained was God's powerful and final justice and judgment for all. Having refused and rejected God's path to mercy and forgiveness, all that remained was destruction...devoted by the Lord to destruction.

This is a sobering statement and truth that should make all of us stop for a minute and ponder. How serious and significant and harmful and destructive must sin and rebellion against God be, if the wages for it are death and destruction? I would say, much more serious than we have believed. When human beings who are each personally created and formed and designed by God for his glory; who are each held together throughout their lives by the word of his power; whose every breath and gift and talent come directly from God; and who live in a world

and universe that shouts the glory of God and unmistakably displays his fingerprints and his character...when these human beings live as if God doesn't exist; when they refuse to acknowledge him and give him glory; when they exalt themselves as self-sufficient and capable of living life without him; when they give the glory he deserves to false gods they've created with their own hands or to created things or beings like animals or angels; when they ignore and suppress the conscience he's given each human being and give themselves over to things they know are wrong and against God's design...When human beings go through life this way and continue to reject God and refuse to return to him in repentance and faith, God's justice and judgment will eventually be carried out in the most effective way possible. God's holy and just character demands it. He can't deny who he is and fail to carry out effective justice against sin.

This can only lead us to conclude that sin and rebellion against the God who created each of us and holds us together every moment is not a light thing or something that's just not that big of a deal. Sin is serious enough that the people in Jericho who ignored God's warnings and continued in their rebellion against him, became devoted to destruction. Sin is serious enough that our holy and just God has prepared a place called hell where the wages for sin will be paid for eternity to all those who have rejected him. Sin is serious enough that God himself, because of his great love for us, chose to send his own Son to pay its penalty for us on the cross and absorb the white-hot wrath for sin that we each deserved. And he chose to do this so that every person in the human race, including these people in Jericho, could have an opportunity to receive his love and grace and mercy, like Rahab and her family did, and not have to suffer the fate of being devoted to destruction.

So the question is, do we view sin as that serious today? Do we think it's a big deal at all if people who live and move and have their being only through the continuous work of God, live their lives as if he doesn't exist? We live in a world where sin and rebellion against God is so commonplace that we're pretty much desensitized to it. Unless someone commits a murder or seriously harms another person, we don't think it's that big of a deal. We might even subtly buy into the worldly conception that there's just not that much evidence that God exists and people can be excused for not believing in him. We may think people can be excused for not noticing that the complexity and design inherent in the universe and in every living being simply shouts that it can't possibly be the result of

random chance and accident. But that view is certainly not what Scripture teaches us, especially in Romans chapter 1. God tells us there that all people are without excuse because his eternal power and divine attributes have been clearly seen by all through his creation. And yet people actively suppress these truths they know about God until over time they don't even notice them anymore and end up believing there's no evidence for God out there. And as sin always does, it affects other people and makes it harder for them to see the fingerprints of God in creation.

And what about those of us who, by God's grace, have become devoted to life instead of destruction, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ? Don't we often tolerate pockets of sin in our own lives and just allow them to sit there and take root? I think it's time we re-engage with the truth of how serious and damaging sin really is and what a high price Jesus had to pay on the cross for it. Would Jesus have gone through the agony of the cross if it was no big deal? Looking back at verse 18 of Joshua chapter 6, notice that Joshua warned God's people not to mess around with the things devoted to destruction; and that if they did, they and the people around them would experience the destructive effects that always accompany sin.

And these effects of sin would not just be personal, but would negatively affect and harm many other people in the process. We'll see how that plays out in chapter 7, when one of God's people ignored this warning and chose instead to dabble in sin. Sin is a lot like the smoke that's been permeating the air all around recently. One person's poor choices on the other side of the state caused a raging forest fire that put people's homes and lives at risk and even spread it's negative effects hundreds of miles away. Sin is never just personal and private as we often convince ourselves. Sin is infinitely more serious than we have believed, and its effects and consequences impact others and will be eternal for those who refuse to accept God's gift of mercy, made possible through Jesus Christ.

May God reawaken us today to that truth, and move us to take it seriously and never allow it to take root in our lives. The holiness and sanctification of God's people is of paramount importance, and God will, in love, discipline us effectively as his children when we disregard his Word and continue in unrepentant sin. And there will be a day of final judgment and wrath for all who continue to reject his one way of salvation through repentance and faith in Christ.

## VI. A PICTURE OF VICTORY AND DESTRUCTION (vs. 20-21)

Well, after these final instructions about the city and its inhabitants from Joshua, the time had come for shouting and the powerful work of God. Picking up in verse 20:

***20 So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. 21 They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.***

God's power is beyond our comprehension, isn't it? The wall fell down flat in an instant as God's people trusted and followed him to victory. All things are possible in dependent relationship with the one true God! For God's people it was powerful victory, but for those who had rejected God, it was utter destruction and defeat.

Perhaps you're still wondering if God was a little harsh here or if the sin of the people of Jericho really justified this utter destruction? You may continue to ask that question as we move through the rest of Joshua and watch as God devotes many others to destruction in giving the Promised Land to the Israelites. But let's be careful that we, with our very limited knowledge and perspective, don't raise ourselves and our wisdom above our Creator and Sustainer, trying to sit in judgment of him and force on him our flawed concept of the seriousness of sin. One thing we know for sure here: the sin in the land of Canaan through the worship of Baal and other false gods and the horrific practices that accompanied it, was extreme. Children were being offered as sacrifices to their gods and sexual immorality was an integral part of the worship. God describes it as "the detestable things they have done for their gods" in Deuteronomy 20:18. And God had given the Amorites and other people groups living in the land many years, more than 400, to turn away from these practices and return to worship of the one true God. But things had only gotten worse.

Hundreds of years earlier, when making his covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, verses 12 through 21, God mentioned the iniquity or sin of the Amorite and how

it was not yet complete. In other words, over the next 400 years while the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, the sin of the Amorites would be getting worse and worse until the only thing left would be God's judgment, carried out as he brought the Israelites into the Promised Land. God also knew that if the Amorites and others living in the land of Canaan were not utterly destroyed, they would bring endless trouble on the Israelites and draw them into their detestable worship practices.

## VII. DEVOTED TO LIFE (vs. 22-25)

Let's move on now to verses 22 to 25 of Joshua chapter 6, where we see what it looks like to be devoted to life rather than destruction. Isn't that what each of us wants today? Another undeniable aspect of God's character is his great love, mercy and grace that so many of us here today have been the blessed recipients of! Rahab and her family experienced this beautiful love, mercy and grace...receiving the forgiveness and new life that God offers to all people, but that few are willing to accept. Picking up in verse 22:

***22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her." 23 So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel. 24 They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. 25 However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.***

God's mercy, love, grace, forgiveness and new life are available to all who will simply repent and accept God's one way of salvation like Rahab and her family did. In doing so, they stepped out of the path of destruction, by stepping into the one house in the city marked with a scarlet thread, signifying that they were accepting God's one way of salvation through faith and alignment with him, and they experienced the salvation and forgiveness and new life that's only possible because of what Christ and his shed blood accomplished on the cross.

May we all heed the words Jesus himself in Matthew 7, verses 13 through 14:

***13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.***

***14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.***

Let's not take sin and its wages lightly. Let's first make sure we've entered through the one narrow gate that leads to life, Jesus Christ. We do this by admitting and turning from our sin, believing in Jesus death on the cross for our sins and resurrection from the dead, and inviting him to be our Savior and the Ruler of our lives. It's that simple! And when we've entered his life, let's never return to the ways of death and destruction that always accompany sin. Let's take sin seriously, repent of it and go in the other direction whenever it crops up, and enjoy the life and peace and rest that flow out of a lifestyle of devotion to the Lord, seeking, listening to, trusting and obeying him.

Did you notice that Rahab and her family got a bonus blessing from coming into relationship with the one true God? Not only were their lives saved from destruction, they also got to keep their belongings as they began their new life among the Israelites! Notice also that the book of Joshua must have been written very soon after the events described in it occurred, because we're told Rahab was still alive and living among the Israelites when it was written. The book of Joshua is not legend and creative storytelling; it's a historical account of events that actually happened as written.

#### **VIII. THE NAIL IN THE COFFIN OF GOD'S DESTRUCTION (vs. 26)**

Well, after the defeat of Jericho, Joshua put the nail in the coffin of God's complete destruction of the city and its inhabitants. In verse 26, we read:

***26 Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the Lord is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with the loss of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he shall set up its gates."***

God's judgment against Jericho was serious and complete and was meant to serve as an example to others, a monument you might say to the destruction and death that is the wages of unrepented sin and a denial of the one true God. Joshua declared that whoever would try to rebuild Jericho would do so at the cost of his oldest and youngest sons. The fulfillment of this curse was later recorded for us in 1 Kings 16, verses 33 and 34. During the reign of Israel's most evil king, Ahab, a man named Hiel the Bethelite re-built Jericho and lost Abiram his firstborn son and his youngest son Segub.

## **IX. THE POWER OF AN OBEDIENT LIFE (v. 27)**

And this brings us to our final verse for today, verse 27, which, in a short sentence, reveals to us the power of an obedient life:

***27 So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.***

Joshua's life shows us that in obedient yoke with God, all things become possible, God's rest is enjoyed, and God's light and power shine through in a way that is clearly visible to other people!

## **X. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION**

As we close today, I would offer this summary of the key truths we've learned today in this passage of Scripture: *Continuing in rebellion against the one true God, ignoring his repeated warnings, and refusing his one path to salvation is dead serious and will end up devoting a person to destruction; while accepting his offer of mercy through repentance and faith expressed in action will devote a person to life, where all things become possible and rest is enjoyed through a lifestyle of seeking, listening to, trusting and obeying the one true God.*

Has what we've studied today challenged at all your understanding of who God is and how seriously he takes sin? It certainly has mine. Are you viewing sin in your life as God does? Has your understanding of God and his character expanded at all today? My hope is that our eyes have been opened to a bigger and more accurate picture of who God is, how seriously he takes sin, and how damaging and destructive sin really is in our lives and in the lives of others. And in that in that deeper understanding, we would develop a greater appreciation for that

great mercy, love, grace, forgiveness and new life most of us here have received. It's hard to fully appreciate the beauty and gift of life until you've come face to face with death. And I hope that in this new appreciation, we would learn to walk and run and dance into the fullness of the new life we've received through Christ...the brand new world he's opened up to us...a world where we give up trying to run our own lives by our wisdom, following our noses and our hearts, and instead learn to follow our Captain, Jesus, who's standing beside us with drawn sword, ready to fill us up with his power and give us the victory as we follow his battle plan...as we become devoted to his purposes rather than our own; seeking him, listening to him, trusting him and following him in obedient action...and developing a heart that longs to share the life we've received with others!

I want to do something a little different today as we close, and share with you a song of reflection and hope as you interact with God about what we've talked about today and where you go from here. The song is called, "Empires," by Hillsong United and it poetically reflects on the joy and healing and brand new world that opens up to all who will give up their efforts to be on throne of their own lives...their own perceived "empires" you might say...the "empires" of our bodies that are really just dirt and clay held together by a loving Creator God. The song reflects on the brand new world that opens up to all who will hand the rule and reign of that empire back to whom it belongs, our King and Creator, Jesus. In that simple choice made through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, destruction and death is replaced by life and healing and peace, and no eye has seen and no mind has conceived the glory that awaits as we walk into life and eternity devoted to and restored to relationship with the One who created us and holds us together...the One in whom we all live and move and have our being (see Acts 17:28)!