

SOME WORDS OF THANKS

“ I should like to turn your attention to the book of Joshua chapter twenty-three verses 4-13 and chapter twenty-four verses 14 and 15.”*

4 Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west.
5 The Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you. 6 *Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left,* 7 that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, 8 *but you shall cling to the Lord your God just as you have done to this day.* 9 For the Lord has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. 10 One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. 11 *Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God.* 12 For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, 13 know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you. (*Emphasis added*)

14 “Now therefore *fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.* 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*” (*Emphasis added*)**

PRAYER

Context:

When we think about failure it would be prudent to remember what the great novelist Earnest Hemingway said about how bankruptcy happens, “Two way’s, gradually, then suddenly.”

And this is the pattern of what happens to the children of Israel after the death of their leader Joshua.

**Martin Lloyd Jones*

** *All Scripture ESV unless otherwise noted*

As the book of Joshua comes to a close it ends on a fairly optimistic note. Israel has *mostly* conquered the land of Canaan that God had promised them. They are living well under the system God had given them through the Law of Moses (which we will come back to). Their future seems bright. Joshua gives them final instructions and encouragement mixed with warning and then dies at a ripe age! And while his loss is sad, it is presented in a positive, hopeful light. But underneath this is a simmering problem that is destined to boil over. Joshua saw these hence his instructions and warnings. There were two great failures that this generation, that otherwise are among the best recorded in the Old Testament.

1. They did not finish the conquest of Canaan
2. They did not teach their children to follow God

Joshua tries to warn them ahead of time of what they were to pass on to future generations in his two farewell addresses recorded in chapters 23 and 24.

What Were they to Teach

The first address is to the elders of Israel, the second is to the general people.

In this we see a discipleship structure. Joshua teaches the elders who are also to lead and teach the people, who are to pass it on to those after them.

Aside: Think about 2 Timothy 2:2 “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” Paul-Timothy,-Faithful men-others

Joshua in his farewells intertwines for his two audiences reminders of what God has done, instruction on how to follow God, and he outlines consequences for failure.

The instructions are what is to be taught to the next generation, it is what is to be demonstrated and passed on.

Joshua 23:6, 8, 11

- 6 Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left,
- 8 but you shall cling to the Lord your God just as you have done to this day.
- 11 Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God.

To the Elders they are instructed to: Keep the Book of the Law (23:6) Cling to God (23:8) Be careful to love God (23:11)

To the Elders

1. To Keep the Book of the Law

God has given his people LOVING instruction. The law is for our good and God’s glory.

Like David said, the law is to be like honey on our lips (Ps 119:103) It is frankly immature to only ever see God's law in a negative light.

Application: Do your children see you delighting in the law of God? It is interesting to me to witness parents creating extra Biblical burdens for their children such as educational or social expectations while ignoring the actual laws God has given around things like modesty, speech, sexuality, or personal holiness.

2. Cling to God

To cling often times can call to mind the idea of being afraid. But I think the better translation/understanding is, "Hold Fast." Perhaps you have seen the great film Master and Commander about the captain of a British Man of War during the Napoleonic Wars. One of his gunners, the man who aims and fires one of the cannon, has tattooed on his knuckles Hold and Fast, to remind himself and his gunnery crew not only not to flee in fear, but to stand tall, loyal, to wait for their precise moment to fight well and win, to follow their orders and chain of command. If they hold fast then victory is possible. For the believer our victory is assured, won by Christ and we, hold fast to him.

Application: One of the most impactful thing a child can observe from a parent is in how they hold fast particularly when life goes wrong. In my own life watching the vast difference from my mother and father marked me. When the money ran out and he didn't get his way my father ran to sin, lost his pastorate, and became the kind of weak, bitter person I never want to become. My mother struggled mightily, but held fast, and is a life-giving person. Neither of them ever sat me and said watch this. I merely had a front-row seat as their child and observed for myself. Your kids are watching you, we do not cling to God in a vacuum.

3. Be Careful to Love God

Love properly defined is doing what is best of another regardless of cost of consequence. This is why we must be CAREFUL to follow the law. It is how we are showing our love for God. God has made it clear how he wants to be loved.

If you love God you will follow his commandments.

Ex. Luther the separation of the commandments

Shemmi, "Love God and do as you please, the rest is commentary.

Application: It is simple to say but hard to do when you choose to love God with your following of his laws. But what an incredible lesson it is when you show that at the end of the day, because of your love for God, you GET to follow his laws, you do not HAVE to follow his laws.

Summation: If you love God and cling to him you will want to carefully follow his laws. This becomes not a have to, but a get it. It was important for the Children of Israel to see their elders loving God in this way.

Joshua 24:14-15

14 "Now therefore *fear the Lord* and *serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.* 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your

fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" (Emphasis added)

The people are instructed to: Fear the Lord (24:14), Serve faithfully and sincerely (24:14), Put away idols (24:14) and Choose who you will serve. (24:15)

Let us look at these instructions, passed from Joshua, to the elders, to the people and were supposed to be passed on to their children.

1. Fear the Lord

There is such a thing as healthy fear.

Obligatory Lewis quote: "Safe?" ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."*

Application: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10) As we stand in awe and the might, glory, and holiness of God, up and against our own sinful fallenness, we should have fear of the Lord. And yet, the gospel frees us from our rightfully earned condemnation, to marvel at his love, his goodness. In that we are safe. Parents, strive to reflect God well in being a, sometimes, feared authority, with being a safe refuge for your kids. In that place they will not only be able to learn wisdom from you, as you teach them, but they also will scale that up into their own fear of the Lord.

2. Serve Him with Sincerity and Faithfulness

The Hebrew for sincerity can be understood in modern terms as high fidelity. A near perfect copy.

Remember 2 Timothy 2:2 essentially, "copy me as I copy Jesus" Paul was so confident of his sincerity, his fidelity to Christ, that he had no hesitation saying copy me.

Application: Our fidelity to Christ should be easily observed. Do as I say and not as I do, will not work. Children copy before they can become original. Consider, what is the template you are setting out? What are the boundaries of personal holiness you are setting forward? Do you prioritize service to God or service to the things of this world? Or to put it another way, "where your treasure is, there where your heart will be also." (Matt 6:21) Where is your treasure when it comes to your kids? Have you verbally said Jesus is Lord of all, but your actions and priorities show a wildly different picture?

3. Put away idols

There were very obvious idols in Joshua's time. An idol can be a good thing that becomes a God thing. It demands of you time, energy, attention, emotion, finances. It is loving creation rather than the creator (Rom 1:25)

C.S. Lewis, The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe

Application: In our culture idols are less obvious. We may not quite go to a shrine or temple in an easily recognizable way. But we all have them. An obvious one is sitting in your pocket right now. How much time? How much money? How is your emotional state if you are separated from it? Is that charging station a little shrine, with the ritual of bowing your head to unplug it, then lifting its light to your face... I exaggerate slightly, but we live in a spiritual world fighting against powers and principalities. What are the idols that are taking your families eyes off Christ and on to them? Again good things, but terrible God things. Should you, take the leadership of your kids and put them away? What other idols may have crept in? Is that university a temple that you will sacrifice to on its promise of a good degree? Is that trophy of elite performance in sport or music an idol that you are pursuing over your pursuit of loving God?

A positive look at putting away idols is to focus our worship on the glory of Christ. We must stoke our affections for Him in such a way that he is above all things in this world.

John Owen: “Oh to behold the Glory of Christ! Here in would I live, Here in would I die, here on would I dwell in my thoughts and my affections until all things here below become as dead and deformed things, and in no longer, any way, calling out for my affections”*

4. Choose Who you will Serve

Application: Just as Joshua chose for his house that they would serve the Lord. It is the duty of parents to choose for their family that as a unit they will serve the Lord. There is a strange hesitation on the part of parents to choose prioritizing service to God for their children when there is no hesitation in choosing their clothing, food, education. God has placed children under parental authority in his wisdom. Not the other way around. Is it possible that because of a failure to declare and be a distinctly Christian family who serves the Lord children wander due to a lack of direction? Parents choose for your children, give them that identity in Christ above all else before the world tries to choose for them, all too soon.

Failure to Teach

If these commands had been kept and passed on and kept then we would have seen yet another successful generation. Instead what we get is the book of Judges where early on (chapter 2) we are given a recap or flashback of Joshua’s death and his generation juxtaposed with the following generation.

**John Owen, The Glory of Christ*

Judges 2:6-16

6 When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. 7 And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel. 8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110 years. 9 And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. 10 And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel. 11 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. 12 And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. 13 They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. 14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. 15 Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress. 16 Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

The placement is theological not chronological. Similar to the longer repeat of the sixth day of creation in Genesis 2. The point is to draw our attention to the juxtaposition of 2:7 and 2:11*

The author wants us to see very clearly that the “faithful” generation did not teach their children to follow God and left them in a world with temptations to sin and idolatry were rampant.

Notice how complete the failure at every point. The Law is broken:

God is not loved

No one fears God because they do not remember him

No service

The worship of idols

They choose the world and in the passive wrath of God they end up serving their enemies.

I am reminded of the observation sometimes attributed to the great theologian J. I. Packer about the American Puritans and their own failure. He said, “The first generation loved the gospel, the second generation assumed the gospel, the third generation hated the gospel.”

Parents, YOU teaching your kids matters. Outsourcing your child's spiritual growth to “professionals” does not work. See deconstruction. Primary responsibility is yours, God gave you, your own kids.

ILLUSTRATION OF TIMELINE WILL GO HERE

Conclusion

There is hope at the end of this passage in the demonstration of God's faithfulness to His people.

Judges 2:16

16 Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

The passage, and indeed the book goes on to show again and again Gods faithfulness to his faithless people. If God can rescue time and again these stubborn, sinful, idiotic people, call them back to Himself, strengthen them to do what is right. Do you doubt that he cannot empower you to teach your children, to choose for them, to work in their hearts by your example, that you raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Consider all that God has equipped you with and pass that on to your children. Your Heavenly Father has given you:

His Word

He has given you this church

He has given you teachers

He has given you His Son

He has given you His Spirit

The Father has given you Himself

Why Future Generations Fail 為何後代失敗 (Joshua 約書亞記 23:4-13, 24:14-15)

8/31/25

致謝

「我想請大家把聖經翻到約書亞記 23:4-13 和 24:14-15。」

[23 章] 4 「我所剪除和所剩下的各國，從約但河起到日落之處的大海，我已經拈鬮分給你們各支派為業。5 耶和華你們的神必將他們從你們面前趕出去，使他們離開你們，你們就必得他們的地為業，正如耶和華你們的神所應許的。6 所以，你們要大大壯膽，謹守遵行寫在摩西律法書上的一切話，不可偏離左右。7 不可與你們中間所剩下的這些國民攙雜。他們的神，你們不可提他的名，不可指著他起誓，也不可事奉、叩拜；8 只要照著你們到今日所行的，專靠耶和華你們的神。9 因為耶和華已經把又大又強的國民從你們面前趕出；直到今日，沒有一人在你們面前站立得住。10 你們一人必追趕千人，因耶和華你們的神照他所應許的，為你們爭戰。11 你們要分外謹慎，愛耶和華你們的神。12 你們若稍微轉去，與你們中間所剩下的這些國民聯絡，彼此結親，互相往來，13 你們要確實知道，耶和華你們的神必不再將他們從你們眼前趕出；他們卻要成為你們的網羅、機檻、肋上的鞭、眼中的刺，直到你們在耶和華你們神所賜的這美地上滅亡。」

[24 章] 14 「現在你們要敬畏耶和華，誠心實意地事奉他，將你們列祖在大河那邊和在埃及所事奉的神除掉，去事奉耶和華。15 若是你們以事奉耶和華為不好，今日就可以選擇所要事奉的：是你們列祖在大河那邊所事奉的神呢？是你們所住這地的亞摩利人的神呢？至於我和我家，我們必定事奉耶和華。」

禱告

背景

當我們思考失敗這件事的時候，請謹記偉大小說家海明威對破產的描述：「有兩種方式，漸進地，然後突然地。」這正是以色列人在他們的領袖約書亞去世後的情形。

當《約書亞記》接近尾聲時，它以相當樂觀的語調結束。以色列人大致上已經征服了神所應許給他們的迦南地。他們按照神藉著摩西律法所定下的模式生活得很好（我們後面會再談到這一點）。他們的未來看起來充滿希望。約書亞在臨終前給他們留下最後的吩咐和勉勵，其中也有警告，然後他在高壽之年離世！雖然他的離去令人難過，但經文以正面且充滿盼望的方式記載。然而，在這樂觀的景象之下，卻潛伏著一個注定會爆發的問題。約書亞察覺到了這一點，因此他發出警告與提醒。這一代人雖然是舊約中記載最優秀的一代，卻有兩個重大的失敗：

1. 他們沒有完全征服迦南地
2. 他們沒有教導兒女跟隨神

第23章和第24章記錄了約書亞的兩篇告別講話。他試圖事先警告人們，有什麼信息要傳承給下一代。

他們應該教導什麼？

約書亞的第一篇講話的對象是以色列的長老們，而第二篇是針對全體百姓。從這裡我們可以看到一個門徒訓練的模式。約書亞教導長老們，長老們則負責帶領並教導百姓，而百姓則要將這些信息傳給後代。補充說明：請思考提摩太後書 2:2：「你在許多見證人面前聽見我所教訓的，也要交託那忠心能教導別人的人。」保羅傳給提摩太，然後傳給忠心的人，再傳給其他人。約書亞在這兩篇講話中，對兩批不同的聽眾穿插了以下內容：提醒他們神過去的作為、他們該如何跟從神，以及他們的失敗會帶來的後果。這些指示是關於他們必須教導下一代的內容，和他們需要實踐出來，並傳承給後代的事情。

約書亞 23:6, 8, 11

6 所以，你們要大大壯膽，謹守遵行寫在摩西律法書上的一切話，不可偏離左右。

8 只要照著你們到今日所行的，專靠耶和華你們的神。

11 你們要分外謹慎，愛耶和華你們的神。

約書亞吩咐長老們要：謹守遵行律法書 (第 6 節)；專靠耶和華 (第 8 節)；謹慎地愛神 (第 11 節)

對於長老們的指示

1. 謹守遵行律法書

神賜給祂的子民的是充滿愛的教導。律法是為了我們的益處，也是為了神的榮耀。就如同大衛所說，律法在我們的口中應該是好像蜂蜜一般的甘甜（詩篇 119:103）。坦白說，若總是以負面的眼光看待神的律法，是不成熟的表現。

應用：你的孩子是否看到你喜愛神的律法？我覺得很有意思的是，常常看到一些父母為孩子加添聖經以外的重擔，例如學業或社交方面的期望，卻忽略了神對於端莊的儀表、言語、男女關係或個人聖潔等方面的要求。

2. 專靠耶和華

「緊緊抓住」這個詞常常讓人聯想到害怕的場面。我認為更貼切的翻譯或理解應該是：「堅守」。也許你看過一部名為《怒海爭鋒》的精彩電影，講述拿破崙戰爭時期一位英國軍艦艦長的故事。其中一位炮手，也就是負責瞄準和發射大炮的人，在他的手指關節上刺了「站穩」與「快速」兩個字，用來提醒自己和他的炮兵小隊，不只是不要因恐懼而逃跑，更要堅定站立、忠貞不移，等待那個準確的時刻去英勇作戰、贏得勝利，並且遵守上頭的命令。如果他們能夠堅守，就有勝利的可能。對於信徒而言，我們的勝利是確定的，因為

基督已經得勝。我們所要做的，就是緊緊抓住祂。

應用：對孩子影響最深遠的事情之一，就是他們看到父母在困境中如何堅持。在我的生命中，父母之間的巨大差異深深地烙印在我心裡。當家裡經濟出現困難、事情不如意時，我的父親選擇犯罪，失去了他牧師的職位，最後變成一個我不想成為的軟弱而充滿苦毒的人。我的母親雖然也經歷極大的掙扎，但她卻堅定站穩，成為一個充滿生命力的人。他們從來沒有坐下來對我說：「注意看這一切。」但作為他們的孩子，我親眼目睹了所有事情。你的孩子也正在看著你。他們看到我們抓住神。

3. 謹慎地愛神

愛的正確定義是：不計算代價或後果，去做對別人最有益的事。因此我們必須「謹慎」地遵行律法，因為這是我們向神表達愛的方式。神已清楚告訴我們祂希望我們怎樣地愛祂。如果你愛神，你就會遵守祂的誡命。例如：路德將誡命作了區分。”Shemmi”：「愛神，然後你便可以隨心所欲，其他都是註解。」

應用：當你透過遵行神的律法來愛神之時，說起來很簡單，行出來卻不容易。但這是一個極很寶貴的教導，你證明一個事實：因著你對神的愛，你是選擇遵行祂的律法，而不是不得不遵行祂的律法。

總結：如果你愛神並緊緊依靠祂，你就會渴望謹慎遵行祂的律法。這不再是「必須」，而是「樂意」。以色列的下一代需要從他們的長老身上，看見如此愛神的榜樣。

[約書亞記 24 章] 14 「現在你們要敬畏耶和華，誠心實意地事奉他，將你們列祖在大河那邊和在埃及所事奉的神除掉，去事奉耶和華。15 若是你們以事奉耶和華為不好，今日就可以選擇所要事奉的：是你們列祖在大河那邊所事奉的神呢？是你們所住這地的亞摩利人的神呢？至於我和我家，我們必定事奉耶和華。」

約書亞教導百姓要：敬畏耶和華 (14 節)、誠心實意地事奉神 (14 節)、除掉偶像 (14 節) 並且選擇所要事奉的對象 (15 節)。

我們來看看這些吩咐：從約書亞傳遞給長老們，然後百姓也要傳遞給他們的孩子。

1. 敬畏耶和華

有一種正面的懼怕稱為「敬畏」。引用路易斯的名言：「安全？」...「誰說過他是安全的？當然他不是安全的。但我告訴你，他是良善的。他是王。」

應用：敬畏耶和華是智慧的開端（箴言 9:10）。當我們站在神的大能、榮耀與聖潔面前，對比我們的罪性與墮落時，我們應當敬畏祂。然而，福音使我們從那原本該得的定罪中得著釋放，使我們驚嘆祂的愛與良善。在這當中，我們感覺到真正的安全。父母們要努力地反映出神的榜樣：在時候成為令人敬畏的權威，同時又是孩子們可以投靠的避風港。在這樣的關係中，孩子不但能從你身上學習智慧，還能將這種敬畏提升，轉化為對神的敬畏。

2. 誠心實意地事奉神

希伯來文中「誠心」這個字，在現代語言中可以理解為「準確」，幾乎是完美的複製。請記得提摩太後書 2:2，保羅的意思基本上是：「你要效法我，如同我效法基督一樣。」保羅認為自己非常坦誠，他對基督也很忠誠，因此他毫不猶豫地說：「效法我。」

應用：我們對基督的忠誠應該是清楚可見的。「你們要聽我的指示，但不要學我的壞榜樣」這種教導方法是行不通的。孩子在發揮創造力之前，首先是模仿者。想想看：你為他們樹立什麼樣的榜樣？你個人聖潔的界線是什麼？你是把事奉神放在優先，還是把世俗的事情放在首位？換句話說：「你的財寶在哪裡，你的心也必在那裡。」（馬太福音 6:21）那麼，當談到你的孩子時，你的「財寶」到底在哪裡？你是否口裡說「耶穌是萬有的主」，但你的行為與優先次序卻並非如此？

3. 除掉偶像

在約書亞的時代，有一些非常明顯的偶像。但偶像也可以是一件好事，問題是它取代了神的地位。它佔據了你的時間、心力、注意、情感或金錢。使人去愛受造之物，而不去愛造物主（羅馬書 1:25）。

應用：在我們的文化中，偶像比較不明顯。我們也許不會去神壇或廟宇，但我們每個人都有偶像。一個非常明顯的例子，現在可能正放在你口袋裡。你花了多少時間在它上面？花了多少金錢？若你與它分離，你的情緒會受到什麼影響？那個充電器是否變成了一個小祭壇，你低頭將它拔出，彷彿在叩拜，然後把它拿起來，使它的光照在你的臉上…。我只是稍微誇張一點。但我們活在一個屬靈爭戰的世界中，正與執政的、掌權的爭戰。有哪些偶像讓你的家人轉移目光，不再注視基督？這些也許本來是好事，但卻成了可怕的神。你是否願意成為孩子的好榜樣，把那些東西收起來？還有什麼事物悄悄地成為偶像？那所大學是否成了一座廟宇，使你願為它犧牲一切來換取學位？那個運動或音樂獎盃，是否成了你追求的目標、過於你追求愛神？

把偶像除去的一個正面方式，就是將我們敬拜的焦點放在基督的榮耀之上。我們必須培養對祂的渴慕，超過世上一切。約翰·歐文說過：「哦，願我能仰慕基督的榮耀！我願活在其中，也願死在其中；我願在思想與情感中常住在其中，直到這世上一切都成為死寂且醜陋的東西，不再吸引我絲毫的心。」

4. 選擇所要事奉的對象

應用：正如約書亞為他的家庭選擇，必定事奉耶和華，作父母的也有責任為整個家庭作出選擇要事奉神。奇怪的是，許多父母在為孩子選擇是要事奉神這件事上猶豫不決，但在衣服、飲食、教育等方面卻毫不猶豫。神在祂的智慧中，將孩子放在父母的權柄之下，而不是父母在孩子的權柄之下。孩子們缺乏方向，是否因為父母沒有堅定宣告並活出一個基督化家庭的見證？家長們，在這個世界為你的孩子做出選擇之前，要幫助他們選擇，使他們的身份深深根植於基督裡。

教導的失敗

如果這些誡命被謹守、傳承並持續遵行，那麼我們應該可以看到另一個成功的世代。然而，我們所看到的卻是《士師記》的光景。在這卷書的一開始（第二章），我們就讀到對約書亞之死及他那一代的回顧，並且與接下來的那一代人形成了鮮明的對比。

[士師記第 2 章] 6 從前約書亞打發以色列百姓去的時候，他們各歸自己的地業，佔據地土。7 約書亞在世和約書亞死後，那些見耶和華為以色列人所行大事的長老還在的時候，百姓都事奉耶和華。8 耶和華的僕人、嫩的兒子約書亞，正一百一十歲就死了。9 以色列人將他葬在他地業的境內，就是在以法蓮山地的亭拿希烈，在迦實山的北邊。10 那世代的人也都歸了自己的列祖。後來有別的世代興起，不知道耶和華，也不知道耶和華為以色列人所行的事。11 以色列人行耶和華眼中看為惡的事，去事奉諸巴力，12 離棄了領他們出埃及地的耶和華他們列祖的神，去叩拜別神，就是四圍列國的神，惹耶和華發怒；13 並離棄耶和華，去事奉巴力和亞斯他錄。14 耶和華的怒氣向以色列人發作，就把他們交在搶奪他們的人手中，又將他們付與四圍仇敵的手中，甚至他們在仇敵面前再不能站立得住。15 他們無論往何處去，耶和華都以災禍攻擊他們，正如耶和華所說的話，又如耶和華向他們所起的誓；他們便極其困苦。16 耶和華興起士師，士師就拯救他們脫離搶奪他們人的手。

這裡的編排是基於神學教訓而不是按照時間的順序。就正如《創世記》第二章中對於第六日的創造的詳細記載。

重點是要我們注意 2:7 和 2:11 之間的對比。作者要讓我們清楚地看見，那一個「忠心」的世代並沒有教導他們的兒女跟隨神，反而把他們放在一個罪惡與拜偶像氾濫的世界中。請注意，他們在每一方面都是徹底的失敗，神的律法被違背：

他們不再愛神，
也沒有人敬畏神，因為他們不再記念祂；
他們不再事奉祂，
他們轉而去敬拜偶像；
他們選擇了這個世界，結果在神的忿怒之下，最終淪為仇敵的奴僕。

我想起一個觀察，是關於美國清教徒的失敗，有人認為是神學家巴刻所說的。他說：「第一代人熱愛福音，第二代人假設福音，第三代人討厭福音。」

父母們，你們親自教導孩子是極其重要的。把孩子的屬靈成長包給「專業人士」是行不通的。主要的責任是你的，是神親自把孩子交給你。

結論

在這段經文的結尾，我們看見神對祂子民信實的展現，帶來了盼望。

士師記 2:16：耶和華興起士師，士師就拯救他們脫離搶奪他們人的手。

這段經文，甚至整卷《士師記》一再顯明：縱然祂的百姓失信，神仍然信實。如果神能一而再、再而三地拯救那些頑固、犯罪、愚昧的百姓，呼召他們回轉歸向祂，並賜力量使他們行公義，那麼你還懷疑祂無法賜你能力，去教導你的兒女、為他們作決定、藉著你的榜樣在他們心中動工，使你能照著主的教訓和警戒養育他們嗎？

請思考，神已經裝備了你，並要你把這一切傳承給你的兒女。你天上的父已賜給你：

祂的話語

這間教會

屬靈的教師

祂的兒子

祂的聖靈

天父已將祂自己賜給你