

Joshua 23:6-13 (NIV)

6 "Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. 7 Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. 8 But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now. 9 "The LORD has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. 10 One of you routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as he promised. 11 So be very careful to love the LORD your God. 12 "But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, 13 then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.

06-23-01-Living in God's Country

patriotism, citizenship, loyalty, Kingdom of God

Jos 23:6-13

The virtue of patriotism prepares us for loyalty to God's Kingdom.

INTRODUCTION:

–Our **text** is from Joshua's retirement speech. As a *military leader*, he warns Israel about losing all they've battled to win. As a *statesman*, he did what **James Freeman Clarke** described: "*A politician thinks of the next election; a statesman, of the next generation.*" –God helped them build a homeland. How would they preserve it for their children and children's children? God's answer is patriotism. Why? **HOM.idea**.

–*Patriotism* is from *patria* "homeland" [lit. "fatherland"]. Patriotic loyalty can become corrupted, misdirected, even idolized, but *God our Father* intends it to point to a higher form of commitment: allegiance to the Kingdom of God. Someday, all earthly homelands will vanish. Loyalty to our eternal homeland, Christ's Kingdom, will be the final measure of our lives before God.

–*Patriotic duties* are part of what being a *born citizen* means. The same is true for those born again in God's Kingdom. But *patriotism* itself is a learned attitude, and it teaches us spiritual lessons....

I. Patriotism Submits to a Higher Law than Self-interest.

- A. To be *morally strong* a nation must preserve the *spiritual ideals* and *ethical motivations* on which it was founded:
1. The words of our Pledge of Allegiance, "*one nation under God*," are continually under attack by those who wish to remove them.
 2. The same is true for "In God we trust" on our currency.
 3. [I had an **American Indian history teacher** in college, who saw what was happening in our country, and told the class: "*History shows that a civilization crumbles and falls apart when it forsakes its ethic.*"]
- B. Our nation was founded on patriotic ideals that put the *country's welfare* above *self-interest*. (But today, many think the #1 Rule in America is "*Do you own thing*," and many modern political and educational leaders have made that standard popular.)

TRANS: Christians have a *dual citizenship*. According to **Phil 3:20**, "our citizenship is in heaven." Joshua said in **v.6**, "*Be very strong*" to obey God's

principles. The word “*be strong*” in the KJV is “*be courageous*.” It takes courage to stand for *God’s truth* when it’s *not politically correct*. But *patriotism* demands it. Our *allegiance is to a higher law* than that of self-interest. That higher law is *God’s Kingdom law of love*.

II. Patriotism Guards the Boundaries of its Citizenship

- A. *Traitors* are the opposite of *patriots*; they ruin the integrity of their nation by maintaining foreign allegiances that lead to acts of treason against national security.
- B. *Citizens of God’s Kingdom* have one mindset: *Christ is King!* They do not betray that allegiance with *worldly thinking*. **This means:**
1. No fraternizing with the enemy– **v.7**, *Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. (We must resist betraying our King, just as Jesus avoided disobeying His Father’s will, when He said, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”)*
 2. In true *patriotism*, there is no wavering in our loyalty to God, **v.8**, *But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now.*

TRANS: Divided national loyalties among its citizens *destabilize* a nation– **Jam 1:8**, A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. This is true in a nation’s life, and also in a believer’s life. Jesus said in **Matt 6:24a**, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” Instability occurs in a Christian’s spiritual life when the boundaries of Kingdom citizenship are broken by disloyalty to the Sovereign Reign of Christ the King.

III. Patriotism Fights for its Country's Values

- A. A nation must be defended against *enemies without and within*.
1. *Defense spending* is needed to defend liberty, but *moral training* is needed to preserve liberty.
 2. [Ever since prayer was banned from public schools in 1963, the USA has had a steady decline in overall *academic achievement* and a progressive increase in *crime, divorce, and sexual promiscuity*.] This decision, by a majority of Supreme Court Justices, is now before the Supreme Judge, and I believe **Rom 1:22**, sums up the verdict: Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools...

3. Americans must look in the mirror to see *our worst enemy*—a society that has proudly declared its independence from God.
- B. Our only hope is national repentance (God promises to *preserve our country*, **if** we will turn from our rebellious sin– **2 Chr 7:14**, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”)
1. Most national enemies in the moral realm are enemies of God’s Kingdom, but God is greater– **v.9**, *The LORD has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. [God blessed the US in winning wars. Many believe the Viet Nam War was a mistake; but the greatest mistake was kicking God out of our public schools right before it happened.]*
 - a. **1 Jo 4:4b (NASB)**, greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (unless the world’s presence in our hearts drives Him away!)
 - b. **Mat 16:18**, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.” (unless the church lets Hell in through the back door!)
 2. Prayer is the power of *one against a thousand*– **v.10**, *One of you routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as he promised.*
 - a. Prayer is our main weapon in spiritual warfare– **2 Co10:3-5**, For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
 - b. By prayer, we fight both for our nation and for God’s kingdom.

CONCLUSION:

–Patriotism has higher laws than self-interest; it guards the integrity of its citizenship; it fights for moral values. But when patriotism dies, the foreign foe infiltrates– **v.12-13** “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.

–Let’s be very careful to love our country with true patriotism, for it will **prepare us (v.11)** to “*be very careful to love the LORD [our] God.*”