

eternal purposes of God never change, but his attitude towards men changes according to their moral relation to him. The change is not in him but in them (2 Chr. 15: 2; Ezra 8: 22; Isa. 17: 3; 23: 15; Isa. 63: 10; Heb. 10: 26-29, 38; Matt. 7: 7, 8). Apostasy would be a greater sin than that of the heathen who knew not God. Joshua does not mean that they had better not try to serve God unless they meant to continue faithful, or that refusal to serve him now would be a venial offence compared with apostasy. He wishes them to count well the cost and thereby strengthen their resolution, not abandon it. It is one of the commonest mistakes of our young people to think that it is better not to make a profession of religion in case they should afterwards fail to maintain it. Their present duty is to confess Christ, and pray for grace to enable them to be true to him.

21. **Nay**—The faithful words of Joshua had their desired effect. The people reiterate their pledge to serve the Lord sincerely.

III. **DECISION RATIFIED.** 22. **Witnesses**—The people now placed on record their deliberate choice of Jehovah. Should they ever forsake him, their present declaration would be evidence that they were false to their solemn vows when they did so, and that he had a right to punish them as Joshua had declared. As a matter of fact, the people never disavowed these obligations when the prophets upbraided them with apostasy. The Book of Joshua, and the chapter before us, shut their mouths against offering any excuse for their rebellion.

23. **The strange gods which are among you**—Idolatry may have been secretly practised by some (Ps. 66: 18; Prov. 28: 9). Compare Judges 17: 5; Gen. 35: 2; 1 Sam. 7: 3. **Incline your heart**—It was not enough to conform outwardly to the worship of God, he demands truth in the inward parts. The only safeguard against idolatry of any kind is to have the heart filled with the love of God.

24. For the third time and in most solemn and emphatic terms the people reiterate their decision. "Obedience to God's revealed will is the real test of a true servant of God; not merely excited religious feelings, or formal professions, or outward connection with the church or people of God, or engaging in acts of worship with seeming devotion. If ye love me, said the Saviour, keep my commandments. It is the servant who did his lord's will who gains his approval." (Green).

25. **Made a covenant**—This was a renewal of the covenant at Sinai (Exod. 19: 20; 24: 3-8; Heb. 9: 19, 26). It had been previously renewed by Moses in "the field" of Moab (Deut. 29: 1; 31: 9-11, 25, 26). Doubtless Joshua observed a fitting, impressive ceremonial. **Set them a statue**—A law "engraved," as the word signifies, like the two tables of stone, or the inscriptions on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. **An ordinance**—Something set upright, as a pillar, hence a fundamental law for all time. The covenant was solemnly recorded as part of the national constitution. It was registered in the book of the law of God. (verse 26).

LESSONS. 1. God's goodness should lead us to love and serve him. 2. He demands our undivided worship and devotion. 3. He will not overlook sin, but will receive the penitent who pleads the merits of Jesus. 4. Whatever others may do, we should serve the Lord. 5. Solemn vows are helpful.

THE BLACKBOARD.

CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY.

A COVENANT CLAIM	CIRCUMCISION	BAPTISM
A GREAT DELIVERER	EGYPT	SIN
A MIGHTY PROTECTOR	THE DESERT	LIFE'S BLESSINGS
A RICH INHERITANCE	CANAAN	HEAVEN

"We also will serve the Lord."

When a scholar leaves your school because of removal to another city or town give him a letter of introduction to some Superintendent or Pastor, and also inform that superintendent or Pastor of the newcomer and ask that he look him up. It may be that will save him from dropping out of Sunday School altogether as so many do upon removing to a new place to live.

Teach your scholars that giving, if rightly done, is worship. Always call attention to the offering for the day by holding it up and making a short prayer asking a blessing upon both the gift and givers. You might mention the "omitters" also.