

# CLAIM THE PROMISES

## The book of Joshua

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Victorious Christian Living," by Alan Redpath
- "What the Bible Teaches," by S. Grant
- "The Gospel in the book of Joshua," S.W. Partridge and Co.
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

### Joshua 1:1-5

#### I WILL BE WITH THEE

THE GOAL OF CHRISTIAN LIVING. [Joshua 1:1-4]

God's master plan was to have His people in Canaan – the goal to which He was leading them. It was a land flowing with milk and honey. He had promised this land to Abraham. Deliverance from Egypt was in preparation for enjoying Canaan rest. [Heb.3,4]. The foundations of our faith – the new birth and justification, are laid that we may hold the building of the Christian life in sanctification and holiness. We were brought out that we might be brought in.

Many Christians are content to be in the wilderness and remain there. "Just as long as I am saved, that's all I want." That is where Christians live in defeat rather than victory. We do not gain the rest God promises by resolutions or by consecration or by prayer or by fasting. We receive the blessings of the promised land by faith and work down from victory rather than trying to work up to victory. The cross and the empty tomb give us the victory. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We only possess what we claim. [Jos.1:3-4]. A generation of doubters died before the land was claimed. Many Christians perish in indulgence, worldliness and sin and are "saved by fire." Joshua and Caleb "wholly followed the Lord" and went into the promised land of blessing.

There are enemies (seven nations) that try to hold that land. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities ---powers--- rulers of darkness---spiritual wickedness. We must press ahead against every foe and against every assault, knowing that our Joshua has conquered all foes. The book of Joshua is more than a record of events but a revelation of what God can do in and through the life that is yielded to Him.

Joshua 1:1. Israel is at the Jordan River and have completed the mourning period for Moses who has just died [De.34:7-8]. The disobedient generation has died and now a new generation is there waiting to possess the land. They have been taught to obey God's laws. They have learned that faith and obedience bring victory, while unbelief and disobedience brings tragedy.

**Joshua.1:2.** *"Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them...."*

#### GET UP AND GO.

Sometimes the best thing we can do in a situation is sit and quietly wait for directions from God. However, when those directions come, there is no reason to wait any longer. There is a time for waiting, and there is a time for walking. There is a time for introspection, and there is for action. There is a time for reading and there is a time for working. There is a time for planning, and there is a time for carrying out the plans. There is a time for thinking, and there is a time for speaking. There is a time for finding out what is wrong, and there is a time for fixing what is wrong. There is a time for defining the problem, and there is a time for doing something about the problem. There is a time for preparing, and there is a time for carrying out the work.

In the remaining time I have, let me not just sit and observe, but arise and go over the obstacles that are in the way of full blessing and joy. If this can be done, the effect will be seen by others and they too may act in a positive way.

**"Longsuffering God and Father of infinite patience: How I praise Thee for not walking away disgusted with me when I have been dragging my feet; for encouraging me to get with it when You had probably wanted to demand an explanation for my sloth. Thanks, from the bottom of my heart, for giving me opportunities again and again to**

**start over and get it right this time. And all praise and glory to Thee, for continually doing "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Amen."**

The Bible is a book of divine revelation through which God reveals His plan to redeem mankind. In it God's love, our sin, God's justice and mercy lead us to understand His plan for our salvation. God dealt with Israel before Christ came in a similar way as He deals with us today through the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though the Old Testament is ancient history, it is not a dry description of facts and dates, but a revelation to us of the way God deals with people. We have been made in His image so we can know Him, love Him, and enjoy Him forever. Through these historical accounts of His dealing with Israel, we understand how He expects us to respond to Him and His word. When we read the scriptures, we are challenged to live them out each day in holy living and ethical conduct. The book of Joshua is the book that teaches us about the faithfulness of God to His people.

Seven nations held the land of Canaan that had to be defeated and destroyed. God had, in mercy, given the witness of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to the forefathers of those nations. But there had been no acknowledgement on their part of the Lord God. Because of their sins of worshiping snakes, religious prostitution and the sacrificing of their children to their gods, they were to be destroyed. Mercy had preceded the coming judgment that was about to fall on them because reports of God's mighty acts toward Israel in the wilderness for forty years had reached their ears and again, they were made aware of the One True God. Rahab knew that God had miraculously brought them through the Red Sea and no doubt other miracles were known by the people of those nations. The defeat of Sihon and Og was well known. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers." True believers today do not fit in well with all that is going on in the world. Our convictions are different, our conduct is different and our religious activities are different. The book of Joshua illustrates what believers can be, and do, when we are yielded to the Lord and are led by the Holy Spirit.

The power of the Holy Spirit does not cancel out the need for discipline in our lives nor excuse us from pressing forward in spite of difficulties and opposition. His power keeps us from defeat and empowers us to conquer those who want to conquer us. The Bible is accurate in its historical accounts and is authentic in describing how God uses and guides His people successfully through the pitfalls and snares that Satan, the world and the flesh use to try to conquer us. It describes how holiness of life, ethical conduct in the events that we face, lead us into effective living that glorifies God and satisfies us.

We have choices to make in our Christian life. We can live in the defeat of wilderness living or in victory in the promised land. It depends on us whether we possess our possessions in Christ and enjoy those spiritual blessings, or live without knowing the blessing of enjoying the promises of God which He gave when He saved us. The blessings are provided and are given already, but they have to be taken and used to accomplish the purpose for which they were given. We have been brought out of the world and the wilderness of purposeless living, to be brought in to a life of victorious Christian living. Defeat in the wilderness or victory in Jesus depends on us. Victory in Christ does not come by making resolutions. Consecration sets us apart but it does not take us in to experience what God already provided and made ours to have. Even prayer and fasting doesn't make these blessings a fact. We have "all things" in Christ, now which we need to take hold of them for ourselves.

What God's people need is to move forward in faith and the power of the Holy Spirit and use what we have been given in Christ for full victorious living. The problem most believers have is we have a tendency to settle down to premature rest before we have fulfilled God's will for us. That leads to indifference and worldly living. The exhortations to go forward in this effort to claim what God has for us, is founded on God's grace toward us. The things He gives us to do, He gives us the power to perform. Those things are made known to us by reading what He wants of us and then looking at how He accomplished His purpose through others. These will become personally ours by experience and that is what makes the "land of Beulah" such a joy and blessing to us. The book of Joshua instructs us as to entering the promised land, conquering the foes in the promised land and dividing the promised land to where we can participate in the things of God as He intended. This teaching is put into New Testament context in Hebrews 3 and 4, and in Ephesians where the scriptures speak of the "heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

An overview of the book of Joshua is given in the few words of verse 2. The cross and empty tomb tell us of victory already attained so we are not to stay moping about in the wilderness of worldly living and unclaimed promise. Three times Joshua was told to "be strong and of a good courage." The first time was because of God's grace in giving them the land already. The second time was because God said to, and He has that right. The third time was when God authorized Joshua to carry out this commission. When God gives

directions to His people, they need to be acted upon. The leadership of God's people may change but the objectives before us do not change.

God recognized and sanctioned the change of leadership from Moses to Joshua. Moses had changed his name from Oshea, which means "deliverance," to Joshua, which means "the Lord's salvation." He is an Old Testament type of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the "Captain of our salvation." Joshua had proved himself for years by experience all the way from Egypt to the promised land. He was one of two, the other one was Caleb, who came the whole way from Egypt to Canaan. Leaders need to be faithful and experienced, and also ethical before they can be effective. We will have to stand up to pressures to compromise, even from our brethren on occasion, but every leader needs to remember the One who has called us to lead His people.

A leader needs to know the objective before us as the people of God. They need to know their own people well enough that they have the confidence of the saints. They also need to know their own strengths and weaknesses. Faith and courage are needed for effective leadership, not an inflated ego. An intelligent, spiritual man who is submissive to God will be listened to and obeyed because he has listened to God himself and has obeyed God. Spiritual maturity takes time and experience. Unnatural growth that takes off like a shot leads to problems in sustaining that growth and experiencing what has been learned by words rather than practice.

One who goes before God's people to guide them has first gotten his guidance from God. Occupying what has been given us takes time, and the boundaries of God's intention have been described to us by God, not our own view of things. Consistent, unchangeable leaders are never to be selfish and stubborn, but sensible, diligent and determined to stay the course as God has revealed it. God appoints the leaders of His people knowing that such persons can be trusted, have been trusted before and have their confidence in God. God can trust them with success in conflict and service. He will be with them in conflict and service, and He assures them He will not abandon them in conflict and service.

**Joshua 1:7.** *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."*

#### **BE STRONG.**

To lead God's people is not an easy task,  
Some will complain and others never ask  
For advice - serious counsel they seldom take,  
But ignore the biblical responses you will make.  
You who have been called to lead by the Holy Spirit -  
Be strong in your leadership, God has called you to it.

Are you conscious of God's presence with you?  
Understand He'll not ask what you cannot do.  
Move with confidence - not with uncertainty -  
The Lord has promised, "I will be with thee."  
Pressure to compromise often must be faced -  
Quietly affirm God's truth - season it with grace.

Be courageous in your own personal life with God -  
Sensitive matters will face you; answer with the Word.  
Have the goals before you impressed clearly in your mind -  
Don't hesitate to study and pray, if you seek, you'll find.  
Be strong in your personal life, then help your brother -  
Encourage the saints in this way, so they can help one another.

Take time to personally read what God has to say -  
If you devote some time to read and meditate each day -  
Those you seek to lead will know you practice what you preach -  
A man of meditation is usually a spiritual man of peace.  
When there's success in leadership, give God all the glory -  
There will be failures from time to time and that's another story.

A reliable leader has proven himself, and has listened to his mentors.  
He doesn't waver from God's truth or cater to men's favors.  
He is able to be trusted, God has used him at other times -  
He gladly serves the people of God without trying some ladder to climb.  
The words he uses and his mentor before him are the words of God -

And people have confidence in a man who is truly a man of The Word.

**“Father God, one of the greatest needs Thy people have is leadership that really has been raised up by the Holy Spirit. They need to take the yoke on them and learn how the Lord Jesus Christ responded to the needs and people of His day. Give such men a deep desire to serve Thee by serving Thy people. Give them courage and help them to be strong in faith and in their call to leadership. Bless them with a sense of divine help and help them recognize they are men under authority. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

### **Joshua 1:7-18**

#### **THE LORD THY GOD IS WITH THEE**

When faced with new situations and challenges, the wise person will recognize their need of God being with them to control and guide. Our need of God is always with us but when He leads us to a new work and gives us responsibilities we never had before, we need to hear His voice and be assured of His power working through us. The first conversation in the book of Joshua is God speaking to Joshua. After the assurance of God's written instructions as his guide, then Joshua told officers what to do to prepare for the crossing to the promised land. The third conversation was with the two and a half tribes of those who were settling the east side of Jordan. The fourth conversation was the assuring words from those Joshua was leading when they expressed confidence in him. Clear communication is needed when we are involved in the things of God. This is the first time we read of God communicating through the written word and the necessity of carefully meditating on it to get the full impact of God's intentions.

To succeed in God's eyes in the work to which He has called us, we need to be strong in faith and courageous in our actions. It is essential that we obey His word without putting our own slant on it to suit our ambitions. When we know what God says and have meditated on it enough to know what it means, then we are responsible to act on its truth and follow the path that opens up before us. The promises of God need to be taken personally and then acted upon. Those things God exhorts us to give ourselves to, will lead us to the place where we can claim His promises personally.

The children of Israel knew God's promises to their fathers. They were only young when they were at the edge of the promised land before and personally saw the sad results of their parents failing to be strong and courageous. Now as men and women who were responsible to go forward and claim the promised land, they may have been conscious of their own children looking across the flood waters of the Jordan River at the land beyond and wondering what was going to happen next. Now "the ball was in their own court." It is a wise generation of people who learn from the failures of the generation before them. It is a wise people who realize that when God buries His servant, He raises up another to lead His people. As far as Joshua was concerned, he was God's choice because he heard a distinct call from God assuring him, he was doing God's will and could trust him to lead His people. He had no rival claims to which he was attracted. On God's side of the choice of Joshua for leadership, He knew Joshua was a faithful man who had been trusted with the small things while he lived under the shadow of Moses' leadership for forty years and was effective in his duties.

Now Joshua had the word of God that Moses had written down to meditate and act upon. The presence of the Lord with us is linked to our obedience to God's word. To know what is right and be able to teach others is not what possession of truth means. The blessings promised do not come because we know truth. Truth must be acted on. We must practice what we know. We need to learn to measure the difficulties of life before us by comparing them with God's strength, not the degree of opposition. There will always be opposition to the work of God. But we need to constantly remember that God is greater than His foes.

Our strength is in the Lord and when we truly understand this fact, then we can stand firm when dangers and difficulties come. They are to be expected in the Christian's journey into the land of Beulah. The word of God does not change with the times or places, so we dare not deviate from the written word if we expect to claim the spiritual blessings promised. God's word should not depart from our mouths. It can be used in every situation in which we will be found. It should be our meditation so that we are ready to apply its truths to any matter without hesitation. Spiritual prosperity is not measured by financial success or popularity in the world. Even religious popularity may only be an increase in numbers rather than in faith and obedience.

Faith and obedience work together. There will always be obstacles like the flood waters of Jordan were before the Israelites. Some things we have to leave to God to deal with in His own way, and just do what we know we have to now, leaving the future to Him. Leadership is needed for a work to not be chaos and confusion. A leader's work is to coordinate what he knows to be right and have the people follow his leadership, rather than look at the work ahead with their own doubts. People expect from their leaders the

same things that God expects - faithfulness, confidence based on God's word and obedience that acts upon God's will. Loyalty to our brothers and sisters, and obedience to God also go together.

We have obligations to those with whom we share our common faith, that we cannot postpone. The Lord doesn't force us down the road of obedience but He does make plain the choices I have to live by if I do, and the consequences to accept if I do not. The wise leader knows how to delegate work and is willing to let those carry out that work out to the benefit of all. Joshua gave the officers the responsibility of passing the word to prepare in three days, all the people would need for the coming journey and the conquest to follow. Three days would give them ample time to prepare the food they needed. This was not going to be an impulsive action directed by an impetuous leader. Acting on personal strength is bound to fail. When truth is revealed, take time to make that truth your own by faith. Then it will be useable when we are under pressure from events and people around us.

Quite often the work we do is perceived by the people as intrusive and none of our business. Most people want to decide and act on the things that happen in life without considering at all what the Lord our God wants. People who don't read the Bible consider the conquering of Canaan as an act of imperialism or expansionism. They have not understood the fact that righteous judgment will come upon those who practice extreme wickedness and refuse to repent and turn from their wicked ways. The Lord our God is with us in judgment and justice as well as in grace and blessing.

### **Joshua 1:9-18**

#### **THE MAN GOD USES.**

Leadership demands a faithful man. Joshua did the small things right before doing big things. He was willing to live and work in the shadow of Moses. He acted in faith during the battle of the Amalekites. He ministered to Moses on Mt. Sinai. He wasn't part of the worship of the golden calf. He was one of the faithful spies. He was an encourager of Moses. Moses laid his hands on Joshua. He had learned from Moses and followed his steps. He had learned to obey God, and believed God in spite of what common sense would tell. The walls of Jericho fell after a whole week of no action. His wisdom is obvious as they move through the land.

Leadership demands a call to lead. Joshua had heard God say, "I will be with thee." Men who have experienced God and have been humbled, who desire only the glory of God – have learned the secret of power. They have no rival claims. A leader also needs knowledge of the Word of God. He must learn the Word to be able to teach it to others in a way they can understand. Leaders are called to be channels through which God works to bring blessing to His people. He will have to cancel all other reasons for leadership other than what he believes to be God's will and needs to be a practitioner of holiness.

Effective leadership is often the product of good preparation and encouragement. The persons we pattern ourselves after, will have a definite effect upon us. A person who we know is committed to God provides the best model for us. Four requirements for leadership are: the leader needs to be conscious of the presence of God with him [v.5]. This takes care of discouragement, compromise and uncertainty because we rely on the Lord for assurance. He needs to be courageous in his own spiritual life [v.6]. This is necessary because of sensitive issues that must be handled (land to be divided). The actual objective that God has in His mind must be kept in the forefront and God's promises need to be expressed to others. He also needs to be well acquainted with God's Word [v.8]. To be effective he has to be personally [1] devoted to God's Word [2] a man of meditation [3] a man who practiced what he preached [4] prepared to give God alone, the glory for success. He must have the confidence of the Lord's people [v.17] because he had proved reliable at other times when leading them in a work for God. Joshua wasn't a man who was wavering in his purpose and the children of Israel used the same words as the Lord did when they assured him of their acceptance of his leadership.

Three times Joshua is told to be strong and very courageous:

- Reason # 1 to be strong: God's promise, v.5-6. A sure victory.
- Reason# 2 to be strong: God's Word, v.7-8. A safe Guide.
- Reason #3 to be strong: God's presence, v.9. A sustaining power.

Victory comes through warfare and conflict, not apathy and complacency. Life on the Canaan side of Jordan, came after deliverance from a wilderness experience of defeat. What sort of person does God entrust with spiritual leadership? Joshua was conscious of his inadequacy and weakness so God urged him to "be strong"; "not afraid"; "neither be thou dismayed." God has to humble us, break us, and empty us in order to enable us to do His will. He uses weakness to perfect His strength. Joshua's strength as a leader was because he was a faithful man. He was faithful as a servant to Moses and willing to do the small things. He knew what it was to be a sufferer in Egypt and is like a shadow of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the

reality. In one day, the Lord Jesus stepped out of obscurity and entered His ministry. God spoke aloud then, identifying Him and declaring His pleasure in the Lord Jesus. This is what God wants from those who lead His people today.

He had a distinct call. Joshua knew the enemy would oppose God's people but he was assured of God's call to lead them. There was a river to cross, walled cities to take, a land to be conquered. But he looked beyond all that to the revealed purpose of God and gave himself to be a channel through which God could work. We need such people today. He had the indwelling Word of God. Through the Word, we know the Spirit of God has come in fullness and we are possessed by the Son, strengthened by His power and filled by His Spirit to serve Him. Meditation on the Word of God leads to walking with God, living a holy life, taking leadership authority. The Lord Himself used, "it is written." He said, "the words that I spoke unto you, they are spirit and they are life." God uses the weakling and nobody to be a channel to work His will. A faithful past, a clear direction, and a filling with the Word of God, identifies the man or woman God can use. Cancel every responsibility in your life other than what you believe to be God's will for you.

**Joshua 1:17.** *"According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as He was with Moses."*

#### **LEADERSHIP.**

When changes are made, people have to decide  
Are the changes that are made something I can obey  
A change in leadership is not something to hide  
I have to commit to do what the new leader will say.

If I choose not to, it will adversely affect others  
They will wonder if I am going to start a new war  
Whatever I do, I must remember sisters and brothers  
Will decide if they will act on what God said before.

When God is guiding by His Spirit of truth  
There will be a unity that is good to behold  
The results will be good, because it is God we knew  
Who is leading the company as His blessings unfold.

Like those from the east side of Jordan did choose  
To follow Joshua as they conquered the land  
They had everything to gain and nothing to lose  
As they committed themselves into Joshua's hand.

I am not done yet, much of my life is before  
If the Lord be not come in my lifetime yet  
By God's grace I want daily to follow my Lord  
And the leadership He chooses my loyalty will get.

**"Father, there are those are following my lead. I know this and feel very unworthy of their trust. I am asking Thee to give me politeness, gentleness, kindness and a gracious spirit. I pray for gracious words to say, a defined vision for others to follow, a sense of godly trust in Thee that is evident to those who follow. I am asking that by Thee grace working in me, they will learn to trust and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."**

**Joshua 2.**

#### **PREPARE TO GO FORWARD**

While the people of Israel were prepared their supplies and arranging things to move forward across the Jordan River, Joshua sought intelligence as a good army general does. This wasn't an act of doubt regarding the word of the Lord, but he was doing what he knew how to do from past experience. God does not always let us know in advance how He is going to accomplish the work He puts into our hands. His expectation is that we will act in faith in Him. Acting in faith does not mean we take a careless view of things and sit by and wait for God to do His work without us. "Faith without works is dead."

Good intelligence is important when warfare is involved and we are to go forward to claim what God has done for us. The world is not happy with those whose faith in God alone is their motivation. People might think it is unreasonable to have nothing to do with the sinful activities of those around us. There are many professing Christians who want to cross-pollinate with the things happening around us that appeal to the flesh but have a religious flavor to them. The Lord who guided the spies to a specific place, can do the same

for us today. We may not realize what we are up against until we take time to consider the consequences of our actions.

Why would the spies go to the house of Rahab? The house of Rahab would be a private place and at the same time be a place where information would be quietly made available. It would be a good place to ask questions and have no questions asked in return. It was also a place for quick escape because it was built on the wall. God had directed the spies because He knew her heart was open to Him and that she would be instrumental in Israel's victory over Jericho. Not every person who has faith in God does everything right. The moral standards of Canaan were not the same as those of the people of God. She did not hesitate to lie to protect herself and her interests. Lying is sin so she wasn't justified in that. In Hebrews 11:31, Rahab is commended for her faith in God. Her lie is not mentioned. Under the pressure of the moment Rahab had to make a choice. The solution to a problem may not always be perfect. He simply asks us to put our trust in Him and do what is needed at the time. Flax stacked on a roof made an excellent hiding place. Lying is a common practice among people today, from the children all the way to leaders of nations. One child reportedly said in a Sunday School class, "A lie is an abomination to the Lord - and a very present help in time of trouble."

The Lord led the spies to a place to escape from danger, but it was also the one place in Jericho where one person believed in the God of Israel. We do not gauge a person's interest in God by their background or lifestyle. We may find believers in the most unlikely places. They know the facts about God and His power but have not yet understood the blessings of His grace. "I know the Lord has given this land to you." God in His mercy arranges things so they can hear the Gospel and respond with faith in Christ. "A seeking sinner and a seeking Savior always meet." Mercy was shown to Rahab who knew judgment was coming. "Great fear of you has fallen on us." "All... are melting in fear because of you."

She had heard of the miracle that happened forty years earlier when Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. She knew, as did all the others in that area, of the defeat of Sihon and Og on the east side of the Jordan River. "We have heard... the Lord dried up the water"; "what you did..."; "whom you completely destroyed." She believed her city would be the next to fall under the power of the Lord God of Israel. Others had hardened themselves against what was coming but she wanted deliverance. "Everyone's courage failed (no more courage)."

Moments of decision come and our choices will have an effect on us forever. Rahab believed what she had heard about God. She knew God was working for Israel and she knew judgment was coming on Jericho. There is judgment coming on the world that cannot be avoided. Sin brings judgment, but there is deliverance for individuals. Peace has been made possible through "the blood of His cross." In an unlikely place there was an unlikely person who had her faith in God. We cannot determine a person's interest in salvation by their appearance or lifestyle. We can tell them the Gospel and what God desires from them. By God's grace they can be saved through faith in Christ no matter who or what they are.

Preaching of coming judgment is a legitimate way to reach a person's conscience. To leave people unsuspecting that sin has terrible consequences is unfair to them, is a form of deception and is a disservice to them that has eternal damnation as the result. When a person desires salvation and deliverance from sin, then we can tell them of the mercy and kindness of God. "The Lord your God is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." Rahab confessed her faith in God and turned from the gods of Canaan that could do nothing to save her. The pattern of conversion is "faith comes by hearing," and we hear the truth of God. Believing what is said to be true, leads one to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." When one seeking salvation puts their faith in Christ, they confess Him as Lord and find deliverance. "By faith the harlot Rahab, perished not..."

Many people think the world has improved because people know a lot about many things. Knowledge has increased but morality has not. Sin and death still reign over the affairs of men. The creation of God continues on consistently in the way He intended since the beginning but the sin of mankind still brings the wages of sin which is death. The testimony of coming judgment is treated like a tale that is told to try to keep people civilized. But the coming of the Lord in judgment is not believed by most people. A low moral attitude even among believers has permeated all of humanity. Rahab knew deliverance had to come from somewhere else beside her. "Give me a true token." She testified to her understanding the mercy of God by binding the scarlet cord in the window to show evidence of her faith. She received a promise from the spies that she had to adhere to as well as the spies.

Sometimes the hardest thing we have to do at times is to sit still and do nothing. Why wait? The Lord has us wait at times before we move forward to make sure we are ready. Waiting times directed by God have a

reason. At that time, waiting was so that Rahab could be saved by grace, and her faith was testified to by her works. There was a soul to be saved. One family in that city was saved because one person had faith. Her faith was evidenced by her works [Jas.2:25]. Faith helps us to turn around and do what is right regardless of our past or the disapproval of others. By Rahab's work of faith in receiving the spies in peace, she was justified and declared righteous in the sight of God. She was to be a sharer in the blessings of God's people. The judgment of God was held back until her deliverance was assured. The world is under the judgment of God, but it hasn't happened yet because of those yet to be blessed.

Another reason was that God's people would be sanctified before going to claim their possessions in the promised land. Separation has to be defined. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." There was separation to be confirmed. Everyone who was in Rahab's house was saved. They had to be separate from what was going on around them. So were the children of Israel. God wants His people to be clean. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." How far am I willing to go in holiness before the Lord? In the waiting times in life, we need to prepare to go forward. Waiting times directed by God are not times of indecision but of holy preparation. When the heart is ready and the soul is warm and in fellowship with God, then we are ready to go forward to serve Him.

**Joshua 2:12.** *"Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that you also will show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token."*

#### **TRUE TOKEN.**

There in the window, high on the wall - is it an advertisement, a sign, a symbol?  
The only window on the wall with scarlet showing - she has a reputation  
But notwithstanding comments and criticism - it stays there  
Looked at by all the silent marchers following the horns -  
"Eyes right!" And when the city fell the token of scarlet remained - and all inside.

A cleansed earth, new growth everywhere as feet trod on trackless ground -  
The large work of men's hands there in the background - but not the true token.  
An altar still smoking from the offering to God in thanks- neither is the true token  
There above for all to see for thousands of years yet to come -  
"Eyes up!" The beauties of the rainbow giving promise of a judgment past.

The fourteenth day of the first month in the evening - a door frame and a lintel  
Painted red - blood red, as the firstborn watches anxiously.  
The ceremonial meal is being eaten - standing - clothes on for traveling  
Not the meal, not the clothes - but outside on the door post and header- a true token  
"Eyes ahead!" There in front of you is evidence of a sinless life given - a true token.

Twelve rods lined up in order in the presence of God - looking much alike -  
But they are not the true token - not a random choice is made  
The rebel's rod still there in the morning - the same - but Aaron's rod  
Budded, blossoming, yielding almonds - a true token from within the tabernacle  
"Eyes inward!" God has spoken in a true token of approval.

A letter is read to the company gathered in Thessalonica - warning words  
Can this all be true? The dangers of ignoring God are explained clearly -  
Perhaps some looked at each other and wondered - is this really from God?  
The letters formed on the page are the same - until the end - then proof  
"Eyes down!" Paul's handwriting and signature is there - a true token.

**"O Righteous God, who can by no means clear the guilty. The city was an evil place, yet there was evidence of a visitation. This gives added courage to me to know Thou art not limited to places and people that we think are "saving material." I confess I have a hesitation to consider some who glory in their sin and rebellion in the same light as others. May I have the mind of Christ in all my dealings with people. I ask in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **Joshua 3.**

#### **CROSSING OVER**

If we are not careful, we Christians can quickly get used to the world and wilderness living and miss out on the blessings of living above and beyond the ways and expectations of the unbelieving world around us. It is important that we do not linger in the area of "Shittim" but get up and move out toward the promised land before us. Israel stopped at the banks of the Jordan River to wait for directions from God. In the Christian life important events that happen to us can change us forever. When we come to the end of living for ourselves,

and commit ourselves to following Christ, the whole objective of life is changed. Personal success, financial gain, a famous public reputation, all mean nothing when we come to the place of consecration. Consecration is necessary for a committed life. The wonder-working power of God, requires the sanctification of His people. God does not wait for clever people; He wants clean people. I need to "watch the ark," keep my eyes on Christ, when the time comes to either go forward in faith, or continue to chart my own course in life. The children of Israel were to be far enough away from the ark that everyone could see it, not just those in front of the company. Every child of God has to see for themselves the need of consecration to God

Preparation was necessary. They had to have food for three days. There were other issues that were going to demand the attention of God's people that would take up all their time. Consecration is an outward sign of an inward cleansing and condition that God sees. When God's people have sanctified themselves, there is outward evidence of an inward work. We need to remember who we are as God's people and be willing to wait and watch for the "wonders" God will do for His sanctified people. Every believer is responsible for his or her own sanctification and needs to see Christ for themselves as they go forward to the higher ground where the promises of God are to be apprehended for ourselves. When we come to God we need a pure heart. It takes time and commitment to be holy. We dare not rush God's dealings with us nor ours with Him. It is important that we listen to God before we rush ahead and make mistakes.

Every believer has experienced "The Passover" in their life. They know personally the work of Christ as the Spotless Lamb of God who paid the price of our redemption for us with His own blood. Believers know the Red Sea experience when by the power of Christ, we are delivered from the power of Satan. There were shouts of victory and songs of praise on the banks of the sea after the people of God had passed through it during the night. Now the people of God are at the Jordan River at flood time. Many people are content to be saved and secure, but do not want to be sanctified to the work of God. We have been brought to where we are seated with Christ in heavenly places, but not all believers enjoy all that means unless they have sanctified themselves and enjoy the "wonders" of God among us.

God was going to "magnify" Joshua in the sight of the people so his leadership would be established without question. Joshua told the officers, who told the people what to do in preparation for crossing over the Jordan, and through God's chosen method, the Lord confirmed his leadership. There are no shouts of victory or songs of praise, but a solemn stillness as we move forward in holiness into the heavenly places in Christ. When we truly understand this, there is the quietness of awe associated with worship from the heart and an awareness that God is among us and has designated His leadership for our blessing.

When the ark of the covenant moved out before the people that day, it was in a far-off position so that everyone could see it. Observation was necessary. They were to watch the ark. The key to their success was the presence of God with them. Even though it was 1000 yards away and they wouldn't be able to see it directly, they would be able to see the cloud overhead, and know that God was with them. All the people had to move forward toward the flood-waters in faith, trusting God to do the "wonders" only He can do. We need to keep a clear view of the Lord before us at all times. There may be barriers that seem impossible to cross and make us hesitate or stop before God can show us His wonders. It may seem like we have to step into the water before the difficulty rolls back, but when the time comes, we will find out our Lord has been there before us and done what is needed.

The crossing of the Jordan River was done in the light of day, not the darkness of night as at the Red Sea. The enemies could probably look from their fields where they were harvesting their crops and see the flood waters between them and the Israelites and think they were safe. The inhabitants of the promised land had for four generations since the time of the patriarchs, served idols, a type of the world; practiced religious immorality, a type of the flesh; and worshipped evil spirits, a type of the devil. There is no place for a Christian to compromise with any of these practices. God dealt with the sins of His own people when they were in the wilderness, and He is going to deal with the sins of all humanity in a way that is appropriate for their evil practices.

The crossing of Jordan marked the end of self-centered living and the beginning of new life in the promised land. In our lives as Christians, this marks the end of self-effort and the beginning of life lived on the principle of faith and obedience. When God intends for us to go forward, we dare not linger to pick flowers and enjoy sin's pleasure. His plans for us are in the promised land of fellowship and joy with Him. When we keep a clear view of the Lord Jesus Christ in front of us (the ark) we will not be looking for new experiences or "second blessings," but fellowship with the Lord who is the Victor, not the victories we try to claim for ourselves. When we see what Christ did for us when He "stood still in Jordan," then we realize we don't have to be afraid of the water at all.

Between the believer and the fulfillment of God's purposes is the Jordan with its barriers. The plans of God for us are in Canaan. Barriers of habits, ambition, passion, harsh judgment of others, jealousy and self-will lie between the believer and a full liberty and testimony. The key to victory is assurance of the presence and leadership of the Lord. In Joshua 3, the ark of the covenant is mentioned 10 times. Each of the 2+ million people had to have a clear personal view of the ark. It moved forward, borne by the priests over a half mile in front of the people. The flooded river didn't stop when they were three feet away from the edge. They had to step into the water and God rolled the water back.

Until the priests carrying the ark, stepped into the water, the whole army had been perplexed as they looked at the impossible river. Now their thoughts were centered on that fact that the Lord was with them as symbolized by the ark of the covenant. As the ark went into the water – the impossibility was overcome. The Lord Jesus Christ went to the garden of Gethsemane where the waters of judgment rolled over His soul. Then He went to the cross of Calvary where He died for us and then was buried. But, up from the grave He arose and spoiled principalities and powers [Gal.2:15]. The floods of opposition have been conquered by the victory of the Lord Jesus. The impossibilities of our life have been dealt with before we even get there. When the child of God looks at the Risen Lord, the roar of the flooding Jordan will be silent and we can cross in confidence and victory. The power we need to live, is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He holds back the challenge of sin and temptation; He keeps back the impossible foes.

Israel saw the promised land in the distance across the flood, but the impossible was between them. The same is true of us. We must step ahead in faith with our eyes on Christ, the same as they kept their eyes on the ark. They went through the river on dry ground, with the ark between them and the impossibilities. We just need to look to Christ Himself. This is the way to blessing without self-interest, touchiness or complaints about injustice. This is what the phrase "Not I, but Christ" means.

God always keeps His promises even when we don't know how He is going to do it. His power was demonstrated the very first day of their new life in the promised land. He was the same toward His people after forty years of failure as He was at the beginning of the exodus from Egypt. That miracle would have given the Israelites confidence that God was with them and that what He had promised was real. Twelve men carrying stones out of the river and stacking twelve stones in the river testified to the world as well as God's people what had taken place both in the eyes of men and of God. Our testimony to those around us isn't that we are something in ourselves, but that we are enjoying the blessings of our new life in Christ. Even so we will never forget that under the water is a testimony to the eyes of God that death has taken place on our behalf. We have crossed over into new life when we have experienced death burial and resurrection with Christ.

**Joshua 3:4.** *"Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore."*

#### **HAVE NOT PASSED THIS WAY.**

Crossing Jordan flooded wide with uncertain banks hidden from human eyes  
One waits the days allotted until such time the word is given, "The ark is moving."  
God who dwells with us has given His signal clear - the time has come to go  
To lands uncertain to us but known to God, but first the obstacle - Jordan!

Eyes on evidence of God and seeing faintly in the distance a shoreline looming  
Beyond the ark, so God is with us here and in the final steps of the long journey  
We fold our tents and move at a distance behind the presence of God  
With steps slow and eyes on the spot of distant blue moved by those God chose.

Between here and the promise laying far beyond, lies waters cold and rushing  
Engulfing land all around, covering obstacles that line the path of the final day  
But God knows, and I have learned through all these years to trust Him  
So instead of fear, there is a latent curiosity that makes me think - what's next?

As Jordan is neared by the ark of God, I watch through eyes growing dim -and  
I am reminded, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."  
Yet in the distance I see - the waters stop at God's passing  
The "just wet" feet of the bearing priests are walking on dry ground.

Jordan's water is still there piling up but not hindering the passing of the ark  
It stops, and in the place of divine presence I move past with others  
Crossing safely over on new dried ground that God arranged for me  
To reach the other side without fear, although the waters pile and spread.

True, I have not passed this way before, but knowing God is here in power  
Taking care of any obstacles that might cause fear in me - I trust Him  
And rest in practiced faith that needs, from time to time, to be renewed -  
Not doubting, but wondering in a bit of trepidation because I have not passed here before.

**“I look earnestly toward the land of promise Father. May this time of fellowship and joy that I have with Thee and Thy people be what the high ground of heaven is like: If that is the case then I expect that what I have now is like a foretaste of a wonderful future, with ever increasing wonders of Thyself being made personal to me. I thank Thee and praise Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **JOSHUA 4**

### **THE VALUE OF MEMORIALS**

The Place: Where the children of Israel crossed the Jordan, the heap of 12 stones was piled up for all to see right where they crossed. When the children would ask what the 12 stones meant, they would retell the story of the faithfulness of God. The memories of God's dealings would in this way, be kept fresh to the generations following.

The Purpose: Reminding future generations of God's ways and dealings with His people is important. In this country our children are suffering from revisionist history and that is always an evidence of departure. The traditions, the special days, and special places, recalls for them how God has worked for us in the past. It is important that we too pass on to those who follow us how we were saved, how God answered prayers and how God supplied our needs.

The Power: The stones would remind them of the Lord Himself who brought them out of Egypt, across the wilderness for forty years, and then there was the evidence of His presence still in the ark of the covenant. God didn't want His people unprepared for the task ahead of them. They were to focus on God and remember who was guiding them. Too much activity may shift your focus away from God.

The Principle: Visible and audible reminders help keep important things before the future generations. Retelling stories of God's dealings with us keep memories of God's faithfulness alive. In these reminders, people are learning about God and His ways, not just special skills for themselves. The 12 stones would remind them that all are important to God. Whether one was from the kingly tribe of Judah or the last tribe of Benjamin, no one is unimportant. There was an uncut stone for each tribe.

**Joshua.4:24.** *“That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.”*

### **MEMORIALS.**

Memorials, traditions and family times are important for each generation. Those who are older can remember the past and recount the Lord's ways of blessing, correction and teaching that were so necessary to our effective living. The generation of a family that is in the mainstream of adulthood, need these memorials to keep them aware of the fact that what they do, good - or bad, will leave lasting impressions on their generation and the one that follows. The children and the teenagers need memorials to tie them to their heritage and the people that are a distant memory or are only pictures in a photograph album.

Memorials may be some visible objects such as the pile of stones beside the Jordan River was to the children of Israel. Other memorials are stories that are told and retold to the children so they can form a visual picture of their own in their minds to keep them aware of their significance in a family line. God uses both ways to impress us and keep us as His children aware of what is important to Him. The weekly Lord's Supper, testimony meetings, Gospel meetings and all other gatherings of the assembly, are memorials in themselves.

**“Help me Lord, to leave behind some things that are important to my family; important in that it will lead them to God; important in that it will help focus their lives on things that are eternal. Amen.”**

## **Joshua 4**

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

Some things that happen are not important at all.  
What difference does it make - the cost of a gift or if we're short or tall;  
The significance of a matter or a person or a thing  
Is valued by God, not by how much money it is able to bring.

God intended His people to always remember His power  
After they had crossed over Jordan, they were with stones to erect a tower  
Made of twelve stones from the bed of the river to remind generations to come,  
That after forty years of wilderness wandering, He opened the river to their new home.

Significant memorials have various reasons in cities and in nations.  
Victories won and heroes we have: things that took place in that location.  
And people stop to take pictures there so children will of their heritage be aware.  
And when older folks look around these days, they won't be filled with despair.  
There were hard times and defeats that took place in the ancient and near past.  
But some lessons were learned, and we should remember, troubles don't always last.  
Look at those statues, remember through them the events that took place back then.  
Learn well from the memorial what happened to them, and don't make that mistake again.

We have today memorials to keep, so we learn truth in our Christian life.  
One is the Bible, God's Word in our hand, to give us spiritual light.  
There is the act of baptism to identify us, it's the memorial of death, burial and  
resurrection,  
When by the grace of God, He provided for us the great blessing of eternal salvation.  
The gathering together of the saints of God in times of holy convocation,  
Remind us that here on earth we are a peculiar people, by God - a chosen generation,  
So that here in this world, God will have for Himself a people belonging to Him.  
And every succeeding generation that arises will learn the truth of the Gospel through  
them.

The Lord's Supper each week, is perhaps the most important memorial;  
It reminds us of our Savior and His death on the cross without a written tutorial,  
We look at the bread and see evidence of our Lord Jesus, both of His life and His death.  
Our Lord gave His life and like a seed planted in the ground, just like the scriptures saith,  
From that seed came to us a new life, and we live now in Christ who for us rose again.  
We are raised ourselves as a new creation now to live that new life that is in Him.  
We are placed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ, still living among men here on  
earth.  
The bread of communion of which we take part, has significance of very great worth.

The cup is the emblem of the eternal life our Lord Jesus Christ gave -  
When His blood was shed so that lost sinners through His death He could save.  
His life was eternal and that is the same kind of life that in grace He gave to us  
Who in faith look to Him alone for our eternal salvation, and in Him place our implicit trust;  
More than twelve stones from Jordan's river-bed and placed in a pile on the bank,  
Are saints gathered world-wide around the Lord's table, there to give to God our thanks.  
Not just casually walking by a statue to genuflect, or look at pile of stones;  
But living stones gathered together to praise and worship, giving significance to our Savior  
alone.

**"Father, it has been awhile since I have tried to express myself to Thee in this form of  
verse, so please look upon this feeble attempt in mercy, and if in some way I have  
said what is really in my heart, please accept this as an act of worship. I do so  
appreciate Thy grace and love, and find it hard to say what I means. Thanks for being  
so patient with Thy servant. Amen."**

## **JOSHUA 5**

### **GILGAL, "reproach has been rolled away."**

There would have been a consciousness of God among the people of Israel as they all camped safely on the west bank of the Jordan River at Gilgal. Not only had the waters of Jordan "returned to their place and overflowed the banks" as before the crossing, but the reproach they had endured from Egypt for forty years was rolled away. For all of those years they were considered to be like a "wandering Jew," but now that was all in the past. They were at Gilgal in the land of promise. Thirty-nine years earlier, fear of the Canaanites turned them away and kept them in the wilderness. Now fear of the people of God was in the hearts of the Amorites and Canaanites, and they had no spirit to defend themselves. God was leading His people to go forward rather than remain in defeat and complacency. Obedience to the Lord was all God had expected of His people. He knew what was in their best interests and they had to trust Him to do what was needed. He produced fear in the enemies of Israel without them going to battle against them. Israel had previously underestimated God's power. Now the inhabitants of the land feared them because they were physically in the land.

To wait for instructions from God is very difficult in the life of a Christian. God can deal with opposition in His own way and change the attitudes, both of those who oppose the things of God, and our own attitude toward God and other people. It is possible for us to take God's grace for granted for a long time, and expect Him to act according to what we think or want. God, in grace, has made us His children, but He wants our devotion to Him to be real. Israel entered the land of promise in uncircumcision by the grace of God alone. We are saved by grace alone, but there does come a time when we have to deliberately separate from the old if we are going to have the kind of relationship with God that He wants.

The world and wilderness living is the place of unbelief. Grace is truly experienced when we are separated unto God and self-will is abandoned. Self-will and unbelief were rejected by God and led to 39 lost years. Now a new generation had been born, and those who were young when they left Egypt, were now older people who would understand what their circumcision many years before actually meant. Now that they were at Gilgal, that reproach had rolled away. A new generation of strong young people who had been trained and disciplined in the wilderness where they had to trust God alone for their daily food, was now ready to claim the land God promised His people. But before they could go further, they had to wait for instructions from God.

First things had to be done first. Circumcision was the sign of obedience to God and no confidence in the flesh. Death to the flesh is painful but the end of the process is blessing. Blessings and battles in a Christian's life often go together. When we cut off that which our flesh desires, we come closer to God. The closer we are to God the greater is our separation from the world and its evil ways. Believers are dead to the world and are alive to Christ. Trying to mix the two is not only wrong, but it does not work. "We cannot serve two masters." Gilgal became holy ground to the Israelites. This is where they got new instructions from God. They had a few days eating manna in the promised land, even after circumcision took place because there was a painful time of healing when they were vulnerable, and could not go to fields and gather food for themselves. Even though Israel had crossed Jordan, they were not at liberty to act until circumcision had taken place. Self-judgment is needed to live in the freedom in Christ into which we have been brought. Holy self-denial goes way beyond intellectual words that can explain everything but are powerless to change us. A person can say right words and know all he or she says is scriptural, but it does not become a fact until that person moves out in faith and cuts off the worldliness that misleads us.

The understanding of the cross-work of Christ is not real to us until we act on its truth. Israel could not eat the Passover for 39 years because circumcision had to take place first. No uncircumcised person could eat the Passover. The Passover had been eaten at the foot of Mt. Sinai in fear years before. Now they would wait three days until the fourteenth day of the first month and eat the Passover in celebration of the blessings and promises of God. Christ is our Passover so we "keep the feast" not as a shadow or type but the reality of which the Passover foreshadowed. We keep the feast in remembrance of a Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, and His redemptive work for us. There is nothing in the wilderness of this world that can sustain the people of God. When they entered the land there was grain at hand so they could make the unleavened bread for the Passover and the meal offering. God has provided for us that which we could not provide for ourselves. They kept the feast on the 14th day of the first month; they ate of the "old corn of the land" on the 15th day of the month and the manna stopped on the 16th day of the month. In the past Israel had failed and even "loathed this light bread." Now they were able to go out and work for what they were going to eat. Faith is not a substitute for work, nor is prayer a substitute for action. The freedom of "Gilgal" means that God has brought us into a special place where we live and work in fellowship with Him.

God had made a covenant with Abraham. In that covenant of which circumcision was the sign, the old life was symbolically cut off and a new life with God begins. God had promised Abraham that His people would come into the land in the 4<sup>th</sup> generation [Gen.15:13] because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. Now, 4 generations later, the iniquity was full. The people of the land were immoral; were trafficking in evil spirits; and spiritual evil was rampant in the land.

Gilgal was the place where reproach was rolled away and it became the gathering center for Israel for many years. Even Saul was anointed king there, hundreds of years later. Gilgal was "the place of remembrance." There were twelve stones set up there as a memorial of the nation coming into the place of promise. The central theme of the Bible is the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is very important for us to remember. We remember, as did they would have, that they had been in the wilderness and now a new life begins through our death, burial and resurrection in Christ. We are dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God. We have been raised to walk in newness of life. God's best is provided for us when we are dead to the world and alive to Christ.

Gilgal was also "the place of resurrection:" the reproach that followed us for years has been rolled away when the Lord takes control of one's life. When He controls my life and I leave my willful ways and trust Him, life as a believer really becomes what it should be. Faith reckons me dead to the world and walking in newness of life. Israel was on new ground in the place of promise. A new life began. As "the place of renunciation," the nation was called to a halt as the need of circumcision was addressed. It is not only a national sign, but each individual had to show this evidence of essential surrender. It is viewed as a whole as far as the nation was concerned, but each male had to submit to the terms of the covenant. Gilgal is where they faced, and we face, the terms of our victory – renouncing everything contrary to God's will. What has taken place positionally is now true in practical experience.

Gilgal was "the place of restoration." The Passover had only been observed twice. When the nation was going to be delivered in Egypt and in fear when they were at Mt. Sinai. When circumcision had taken place they were now able to keep the feast in fellowship with God. Now they could get grain for the offerings. Now the new generation was in a condition to be participants of the Passover. They had abandoned this feast of worship, remembrance and fellowship. They had to be circumcised to partake of this feast [Ex.12:48]. They had surrendered their right and privilege by disobedience and unbelief. We can't do the work of God unless we feed on the word of God. We can't get the word of God unless we labor to get it. We cannot speak for God outwardly from our lips, unless we are enjoying Him inwardly in our hearts. The word of God has to "dwell in us richly" before its truth can go out to others. For that to happen, there has to be death to self. They celebrated the Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month about two miles from Jericho. The day after they ate the Passover, the manna ceased and they ate the food from the land of Canaan.

Gilgal was also "the place of realization:" the journey was over. The manna was wilderness food for a wilderness journey. The "old corn of the land" was ripe and ready for their use as the harvesters probably ran for their lives to the walled cities. Now we have all the resources of promise in our risen Christ. It is up to us to make all the provisions of God our own. We need to realize what we are is more important than the work on which we expend so much of our effort. That realization will keep us going forward in faith in God and with gratitude and, hopefully, humility.

Gilgal was "the place of revelation" where Joshua was made to understand the unseen Captain of the host of the Lord was on the job. There was a greater and mightier host, working on behalf of Israel than the army of mere men. It was the "Host of the Lord" under the most mighty "Captain" of all who had come to lead them into the promised land. Our Lord Jesus Christ and the "Host of the Lord" are unseen by us but are working constantly on our behalf against the powers of darkness and Satan. Israel was going under His leadership though He was unseen. Joshua was a leader under higher authority. We are not our own. We are not free to do as we wish. We are under the authority of our Risen Head and that makes the land of promise a fruitful and safe place. We worship before Him, as did Joshua. That is how we know the "Captain" was our Lord. He is for us and He is constantly working for us. It is "holy ground" when we enter the land of Beulah where our Lord bids us follow Him and yield to His leadership.

**Joshua 5:14.** *"And He said, 'Nay; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, 'What saith my Lord to His servant?'"*

#### **CAPTAIN OF THE HOST**

It's here again but it is different this time  
We are not in the wilderness but the promised land.  
We left Egypt by blood; God brought us in by His power  
All the way God led us; the strength was His not ours.

Now the old corn of the land has replaced the manna -  
The spiritual food stopped after the Passover in Canaan.  
Lord, please don't take the heavenly manna away!  
I need the food from heaven each and every day.

There's a land to be possessed, we need to start right here -  
The enemies are many and waiting - Jericho is near.  
Thankfully we know the Lord of hosts is here to lead us -  
He is the same One who from Egypt's bondage freed us.

There are times I stop to wonder at the passing of the years -  
God certainly has maintained us through joy and our tears.  
If it wasn't for His promises, I'd wonder what we've done -  
But He has brought us into a land and He did it all alone.

During the years between our leaving and arrival -  
By grace and power, He provides - maintained our survival.  
Along the way He has allowed me the privilege to serve men -  
And making me to understand, in serving them - I serve Him.

**“The Captain the Host of the Lord, O God, has certainly preserved me on this journey to Canaan. I have appreciated in these last few days what Thou are doing in the land and are having us to be involved in. This land needs to be possessed and for some reason the desire to do that has ceased by many. Please stir these self-centered, complacent people to reach out beyond the areas of their own self-interest. There is a lot that could be done if only the saints of God could see beyond where they are now. I make this intercession in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **JOSHUA 6**

### **BY FAITH**

For the inhabitants of the promised land, survival was more important than bringing in the harvest. Gilgal was the place of testing for the children of Israel where there were some lessons they had to learn before they could go forward in conquest. There had to be circumcision, the cutting off of that which was of the flesh. The Passover was eaten initiating a whole new generation of people to their privileges being the people of God. Then they were able to eat the "old corn of the land" as a promise of things to come when they would finally claim their inheritance. Some things that happen to us may make us wonder why this waiting time is necessary. In our enthusiasm and haste, we neglect some things that have to be done before we can be trusted to go ahead and address the work to which we have been called.

Circumcision had to take place at Gilgal even though for those days of healing the Israelites were very vulnerable to attack. They had to learn that God is "able to do exceedingly abundantly" that which is needed when we cut off all connections with the ungodly world. When that happens, then we give God His rightful place and worship, and remember, in a way similar to that which Israel did at the Passover. Christ is our Passover. A clear demarcation from the world system, a solid commitment to God Himself and remembering His ways with us in the past, sustenance given from the "old corn of the land" prepares us for the conquest - the work the Lord has before us. There are lessons to learn before there are battles to win. Calvary comes before Pentecost. There has to be death to ourselves before the rivers of living water can flow out to others as the Holy Spirit works through us.

Deliverance from the bondage of Satan was through the blood of the lamb that was slain in Egypt for the Israelites. We are delivered from bondage through the blood of the Lamb that was slain at the Cross. We were brought from darkness to light; from the power of Satan unto God. They were delivered from defeat and failure in the wilderness. The wilderness is where Satan attacks with increasing force and increasing subtlety. Satan does not have dominion over God's people. Sin does not have dominion over us. There was deliverance from impossibilities as they crossed into the promised land. All through our life, there will be areas of temptation we cannot deal with unless God assists us. Satan's wiles will always be arrayed against the believer. "Jericho" lies in the path of us all. In ourselves we are not able to bring down the walls of impossibilities. Satan takes advantage of our weaknesses and temperament to bring us down. At other times it may be something that comes and holds us back from being what we should be. There are always lessons of faith we need to learn.

It is possible for us to live our Christian life at a low level in which we know we are saved and secure for heaven, and stop there. In that condition of soul, we will not enter into the blessings of joy that fellowship with God and fruitful service for Him brings. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God," are the words and attitude of those who want to go forward in the things of God, and of those God is willing to lead to higher ground. The present situations of life can only be dealt with by divine power that enables us to go through the obstacles before us by faith. When the Spirit of God is at liberty to use God's people, that is when the Lord brings victory.

Even though there was fear in Jericho and the city was tightly shut up, there was no change in the attitude of the people of Jericho except for Rahab. The people of Jericho were not victims of an unfair God. These were people who were going to reap what they had sown. They were entirely responsible for what was going to happen to them. Some things in life cannot be by-passed because the wages of sin have to be paid. Evil living leads to evil worship that continues to infect a society of people like an uncontrollable disease that ravages a body until the person dies a painful death. Severe judgment comes because of great wickedness and it cannot be avoided in a society or an individual. Jericho was completely shut up which gives us an apt

description of the world in which sin reigns. Jericho is a type of the opposition all believers have in their Christian life. Coexistence of evil and righteousness is impossible.

Some of God's people live their whole lifetime in the wilderness with a little bit of light and occasional victories, but mostly defeat and failure. They have not experienced the joy of consciously living in the presence of God continually on the higher ground of faith. They have little sense of God's presence even though they have experienced redemption from Egyptian bondage. They know deliverance from the consequences of sin through the precious blood of Christ. But the power of sin still holds them back from real joy because of private sins they practice. Indifference to the will of God and the plight of sinners also is like "Jericho" standing in the way of spiritual progress. False teaching, disloyalty to God and His word and no consecration to the Lord and His will for them hinders others from claiming all that God wants them to have and enjoy here.

Israel had to learn that their real weapon was faith, not their own strength. They had learned some lessons at Gilgal but they still had to learn that God's ways are not man's ways. Man's ways would have been to mount a siege and force their way into the city. We need to learn it is the Lord who gives victory and He intends us to do His work in His way. There are walls in life that only God can remove and we need to remember that fact. This is a spiritual warfare we are in. Spiritual resources and a spiritual temperament have great power then used in God's way. Our temperament and character within, and the circumstance and pressures of life from without have to be dealt with in God's way. God wants His people to be "unspotted by the world." He wants purity in His people and those are things we have the responsibility to apply ourselves to in order for them to be real in us.

The thick walls of Jericho that barred the way of the Israelites would seem to be impossible to breach to God's people if they hadn't already learned some lessons of walking by faith. God told Joshua ahead of time the fact that Jericho was already defeated because He had given the city into Joshua's hand by sovereign choice. Joshua gave marching orders one day at a time so the Israelites would learn to walk "by faith not by sight." The promise came before the fact, but faith isn't something we get once and don't need again. Some lessons take time to learn. We are to do what we know is right now and leave the results with God. Israel needed to know the possessing of the land was a spiritual warfare. In order for that to become real to them their faith had to be tested thirteen times before victory came.

As far as we are concerned, in faith we have to look beyond the present work at hand to the One by whose strength victory comes. Like the people of God in the past, we learn that faith has patience. Faith expects obedience. Faith requires discipline. Faith presupposes expectations of results that only God can give. Faith may involve long days of diligence when nothing seems to be happening. But faith trusts God and keeps busy doing what in our hand "with our might as unto the Lord." Faith comes first and then is followed by the energy that brings action. Faith looks ahead with patience and does the work we have been given without knowledge of what will happen in the end.

In Gospel work there is often only the sound of the trumpet but no visible results at the time. However, we must keep sounding forth the knowledge that God is doing what He has planned, and in His own time He will bring victory. Moving in silence with only the sound of seven trumpets and marching feet would be hard to do day after day for those anxious to get into the battle. But the word of the Lord was to go around the city once a day for six days, armed soldiers first, then seven trumpeters making a mournful sound, then the ark of the Lord being carried by the priests and following the ark was the rest of the army. Often, we want to use only the old methods over and over again. Other times we are inclined to use new methods of our own choosing. God wants new men more than new methods. The way He does this is to make things happen in such a way that faith on the part of every person is all that matters.

Silent soldiers not conversing with one another, nor the sound of cadence being called would have been disconcerting to those watchers on the wall of Jericho. The trumpets maintained the order and gave the direction but the eerie march would wear on the nerves of those who would be wondering what would happen next. To some of the marchers God was teaching humility so they would know they had to wait on the Lord and not take matters into their own hands. To those who were fearful, the six days of marching would settle them down to where they would be ready to listen to orders from Joshua. Waiting and working times are important even if it means doing the same thing over and over again. Sound and silence both have a place in the lives of God's people. Silence can produce fear, reverence and respect that sound does not give.

The children of Israel knew the deliverance from Satan's power. They felt presence of God. The ark was the center of the procession that circled the city of Jericho. The armed soldiers went first. Then priests blowing

the trumpets. Following them came the ark. The ark is mentioned eleven times here. Then lastly, the thousands of silent marchers. The spiritual resources of the invaders brought melting fear to the hearts of the people of Jericho. There was serious dread of the silent army that marched around the walls thirteen times. Deliverance came because of their obedience to God. The city was defeated by the most unusual method. God deals with the "walls" in our life when we act in faith [Heb.11:30]. It probably took thirteen times around the walls in silence for people to recognize that it was impossible for them to conquer Jericho, let alone the promised land, without God with them. The power of the enemy is too great. God must bring about the victory over the things that are impossible. The reason the Israelites could silently walk was they knew God was with them and they were obeying Him. The ark of the covenant was in the middle of them. The enemy within the walls could not defeat God. We don't have to make a lot of noise, make our message more "seeker friendly", or use methods that appeal to the flesh. We need to stand firm in fellowship with our brethren and learn the importance of earnest, fervent prayer to God and silence before complaining men. The result, Jericho will fall.

By the seventh day a complacency may have taken place in Jericho and people would expect the same thing to happen again. However, when Joshua had instructed the troops to circle the city seven times and then gave a great shout at the signal of the trumpets, it would have been clear that something special was about to take place. When the walls fell down flat, there was a clear path for each man to go straight forward in front of him. The great shouts of thousands of men from all sides would have terrorized the inhabitants of Jericho and there was no way to go to escape the righteous judgment of God. God was with them in the silence, and He was with them in the sound. The walls of the city were flattened and the city opened up as a city devoted to Him for destruction. In spite of what men may say or think, sin is serious and God must punish sin.

Rahab's faith allowed her and her family to live and she became one of God's people by faith. Joshua's faith led him to do exactly what God said and the victory was assured and his fame spread. The faith of Israel was tested and proven as they did what God said and circled the city thirteen times and then conquered the city by the power of God working through them. Victory was sure a week before Israel even knew how it was going to happen. In every part of life, God intends us to act in faith, and live by faith.

The Lord is with His people now and has promised to return and receive us to Himself. Satan has only a short time to work his havoc of the earth. He will not leave the Lord's people alone until he is bound in the bottomless pit. Ultimately, the day of final victory will come when the Lord appears in glory and great power.

**Joshua.6:5.** *"The people shall ascend up every man straight before him."*

### **STRAIGHT BEFORE**

If I go "straight before," I will not be stepping on another man's toes.

If I go "straight before," I will not be looking back over my shoulder for any reason.

If I go "straight before," I will be minding my own business.

If I go "straight before," I will know where I am going.

If I go "straight before," I will be taking ground for the common good.

If I go "straight before," I will be doing what God says.

If I go "straight before," I will know what I have accomplished.

If I go "straight before," I will know, and others will know, where I have been.

If I go "straight before," I will take responsibility for the gains and losses.

If I go "straight before," I will not be comparing my gains or losses with another person's.

If I go "straight before," I will know who the enemy in front of me is, and where he is.

If I go "straight before," I will know when I have finished the task God gave me.

If I go "straight before," I will be tired when the battle is over, glad that I shared in it with others, thankful that by God's grace, help and power – we won!

**"O Almighty God, our Father: The war is on! I know it, I feel it, I see it all around me. The pressures are on to dodge here or there; to take short cuts; to keep from getting hurt or to not hurt someone else. But I know that is not the way battles are won. The enemy has to be resisted; the gates of hell have to be attacked. Somebody is going to get hurt. That is the way with war. But Father, thanks for providing this armor - it works, it really works! Every piece in its place and even though I'm scared, when it's used, it works. What a relief! The shield sometimes gets heavy - actually the whole armor seemed at first a bit much. But now, when the war is raging, I'm thankful for every piece, and Father, even though I didn't realize it at first, my muscles are building and the armor seems a part of me now. Thanks for arming me ahead of time and being patient with me till I got used to it. Amen."**

## **JOSHUA 7**

### **THE ACCURSED THING**

One of the greatest dangers in the life of a believer is when a significant victory in life has just been experienced. In the flush of triumph, we have a tendency to take credit for that which God has done through His chosen vessel. A serious danger that causes failure in things yet to come is self-confidence - the attitude that "We did it. Look how strong we are." It is essential in any victory, great or small, to give God all the glory. When health returns after a time of sickness, give God all the glory. When a soul is saved when you are guiding them through the scriptures, give God all the glory. When a new work begins and hope is high, give God all the glory. Otherwise defeat is lurking right there even though it is hidden from your view.

The word "but" at the beginning of the chapter gives an ominous note to the story. So far, they had been victorious and the story is a story of successes. But here they are in full retreat. Joshua is on his face before God, filled with dismay. He had counted on unbroken victory in the land and was probably sure that the days of defeat were past; that never again would Israel fail. When things go wrong, how do we react? Is God unable to cope with the enemy? What about God's name and the dishonor to it? A life of unbroken victory over sin is the purpose of God.

Prayer and thanksgiving to God in times of victory produce a sense of humility and gratitude that prevents us from self-centeredness. Humiliation in times of victory is a great preservative from pride, arrogance and focus on the wrong things, in the wrong place and on the wrong person. Right beside self-confidence and self-centeredness is selfishness. Failure happens when we are disobedient to what we know is the mind and will of God. In such times we may be disloyal to God and betray His trust. If I consider what is important to God to not be important to me, I am stealing from Him. And what I do as an individual affects the whole assembly of believers of which I am a part. A person can be strong in faith one day, and be weak as water, acting in the flesh, the next day.

Joshua failed to consult with God and return to Gilgal before he sent men to spy out Ai. He sent them to act, when God was silent to him. Even the strongest believer is subject to failure in the warm glow of a victory. We must always be on our guard against claiming for ourselves that which belongs to God alone. The men he sent to report on the condition and strength of Ai failed to give an accurate account of the city. They did what so many of us do. They underestimated the strength of those who are in the bondage of Satan. It is important for us to always understand that God sees and knows what we cannot see or know. The soldiers that went up to Ai failed in that they thought too highly of themselves thinking they had conquered Jericho by their efforts. To over-estimate ourselves and our capabilities is probably a more serious problem, than to underestimate the strength of the enemy. Defeat in failing to obtain the objective, disgrace when fear take control of us instead of faith in God, and running away when the goal is before us, is the result of acting in the energy of the flesh.

Reasons for failure at Ai were self-confidence because compared to Jericho, it was small. They seemed to suppose that some greatness and strength of their own, caused the defeat at Jericho. There is no more perilous time in a believer's life than when they experience deliverance from sin. We are always dependent on God for everything. Neglect of prayer was another reason. Joshua didn't go back to Gilgal to commune with God. He didn't prostrate himself in humility. He didn't seek God's counsel. Failure to pray makes us insensitive to sin. If you pray in time of victory, you won't have to plead in defeat. The moment of victory is the moment for humility. Disobedience in taking the "accused thing" was a third reason. "Accursed thing" is the word in the AV; "devoted thing" is in the RV. The spoils of Jericho were to be set apart for God. One man had stolen what belonged to God. It was set apart for the Lord. "Israel hath sinned" – they were a nation; a complete entity; God dealt with them as a corporate body. When one member of an assembly is guilty

before God of sin, the verdict from God is "My people have sinned". No individual can sin without affecting the whole church.

Joshua and the elders fell before the ark of the Lord as mourners in their grief and confusion. Humiliation in defeat is understandable, but such humility does not rectify the problem or bring the right solution. Sin has to be acknowledged and dealt with. Even when God gives a victory, we want some of the credit, and self-confidence is the open door to defeat. Defeat reveals the condition of the heart. What starts inside, works its way out. Departure brings despair. When God's name and character are impugned in any way, something must be done. The people of God must preserve the honor of God's name and character in their testimony before the world around us. When sin comes among us, men die. Contagious fear, broken fellowship and doubting God will bring serious judgment upon all who are associated with that sin in any way.

Acting without divine authority and guidance brings mistakes, misjudgment, misgivings and misery. Unbroken victory over sin is no doubt the purpose of God. However, even though God does not make it impossible for His children to sin, He always makes it possible for them *not* to sin. Defeat may happen in a Christian's life but it doesn't need to. The child of God who is going forward in his life in Christ and is being victorious is in more danger of defeat than those who live in the sheltered valley. Satan makes such a person the object of his attack. On the high ground of fellowship with divine Persons, defeat doesn't have to happen, but it may, even there. When evil is detected we must sanctify ourselves and deal quickly with it. The passing of time does not improve the situation and the longer it is put off, the greater the negative effect it has on all the people of God. All Israel was involved in dishonoring the Lord even though Achan was the one who took that which was forbidden. When we are sensitive to right and wrong, we depend on God to lead us and make us spiritually conscious of all that is around us.

When those men were before the Lord and Joshua poured out his soul to the Lord in prayer, that was the first step to recovery. Godly sorrow, even when the words are wrong, opens the door to hope and recovery of spiritual health to the soul. Joshua's open-hearted prayer was a venting of his distress over what had happened. Even though it seemed like he was accusing God of not keeping His promise, it was the start of recovery to fellowship with God. It wasn't long and he was again speaking with the Lord, realized the problem and did what had to be done. The results of failure at Ai were that people died, v.5. Then Israel's army melted in fear, v.5 and Joshua questioned God, v.7-9. God threatened to withdraw His presence from them, v.12, if the sin wasn't dealt with. Achan and his family had to be destroyed, v.24-26.

The explanation from the Lord as to the problem was plain. Sin had taken place and it could not be overlooked. It had to be dealt with. When sin occurs, get up and deal with it by taking action. Remorse does not deal with the problem and should not paralyze us into inactivity. A trespass is stepping over the line of God's boundary, and that is what Achan did when he took those things that belonged to God. He stole from God by claiming for himself what was God's. Perhaps he was remorseful but he didn't seem repentant. When we are indifferent to evil and idolatry of whatever kind it might be, we are on the ground of condemnation. God intends us to do His will all of the time, not just part of the time. Facing sin and putting it away even with tears, leads to repentance and forsaking sin. There will be blessing when we can see an event through the eyes of God. We should never underestimate what is important to God even though we may not completely understand at the moment what is involved. If it is important to Him, it should be important to me.

The cleansing effect of sanctification puts us in the condition of soul to act quickly, scripturally and wisely to bring about the solution to the problems sin causes. The recovered items were not acceptable to God because of the defilement one of His people brought on them. The garment came from Babel, the confusion of idolatry. The gold and silver came from the earth and the love of them is the root of all evil. When one sets his heart on them sorrow comes as the result. Consecration is needed to remind us of our sinfulness and God's holiness. It is possible for one who falls, to be recovered when the heart is sensitive and that person is willing to walk softly before the Lord and His people. A consciousness of the seriousness of sin committed and the effect it has on all of God's people, changes one's heart and conduct.

As far as Achan's confession, "I saw---I coveted---I took," it was words. He had succumbed to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Achan underestimated God. He didn't take God seriously. He had to confess and accept the righteous justice of God. His confession did not excuse Achan and all around him, from the consequences of his actions, nor can we avoid the effects of the "accursed thing." Condemnation and righteous justice is the only way to deal with evil that brought defeat to Israel, death to the soldiers, and dishonor to the Lord. The root cause of it had to be blotted out.

**Joshua 7:1.** *“But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.”*

#### **THE ACCURSED THING.**

Confidence in God wanes and His power dismissed  
Self-confidence raises its swelled head  
Kneeling before God is replaced with a self-centered swagger  
A false sense of security leads to humiliating defeat

The leader didn't lead - he sent men  
Torn clothes - prostrate on the ground - his face in the dirt  
Embarrassed and humiliated - they take the right position  
Then complain! As if the failure is God's fault

God was not then, and is not now, impressed with false humility  
Sharp words come from divine omniscience  
Face sin - deal with it now and properly  
Arouse the people - set yourselves apart - this is important

Act now - do not wait another day when something has to be dealt with  
Get up early - this is a major priority - take action  
Identify the problem without delay - be thorough and careful  
Learn the solution to a problem lies in defining it - precisely

Face the problem squarely - get a confession - don't overlook anything  
Take time to get all the facts in a confession - leave nothing to guesswork  
Emotion and sentiment have no place in this matter  
All the people of God are in jeopardy - deal with sin - biblically

Divine authority is given to be used - use it correctly  
Don't keep or countenance the cause of sin or the sin itself  
Sin can never be allowed a place - don't let the gold, silver, goods tempt  
Get rid of the things that caused the sin as well as the offender.

**“O Holy God, impress upon me whenever necessary the need to never allow sin a place. If it is the sin of covetousness, help me to be content; if it is the sin of greed, take away whatever I should not have; if it is the sin of deceit, let me look again in the face of Him who had no guile or deceit - whatever it may be, I pray that I will be made aware of the sin and the consequences so that I will go no further in it or even in that way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

#### **JOSHUA 8:1-29**

##### **RESTORED TO SERVE**

What are we to do after failure has taken its awful toll on us? How can we go ahead in faith after acting so grievously in the flesh? We need to remember that cleansing from sin and its ravages comes at a cost far higher than we are able to pay. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Our cleansing is real because "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Lessons to be learned at such a time are that we must confess and forsake sin, not continue in it. When we have a fall, after dealing with it scripturally in our lives, and making restitution if that is necessary, and accepting God's forgiveness gratefully, then we need to rise up and move on. Repentance when genuine and forgiveness appreciated, will enable us to refocus our attention on God's will. There are times when such experiences, strengthens us by making us aware of our own insufficiency and God's unlimited strength.

What were the results of dealing with the sin that has affected the whole nation? They were given encouragement from God, 8:1. God promised His presence with them in battle, 8:1. Not only that, God assured them of His guidance and gave them the promise of victory He would accomplish through them, 8:2. Unlike the conquest of Jericho, the Israelites were given God's permission to keep the spoils of battle for themselves, 8:2. A principle of life we should remember and take to heart: When we get rid of sin, and follow God's plan – blessings follow.

Restoration leads us back to where, not only have we dealt with the problem, but to where we experience God's grace and love again and appreciate them more. Israel had tried to do God's work in their own strength and in their own way. Without divine direction and the guidance of the Holy Spirit all the way, to act on our own is going to fail. Now they were directed by God to go back and appear to make the same

mistake and suffer the same humiliation. "The Lord said:" He gave the promise they needed. Recovering lost ground is not easy and it takes time. Thirty minutes of willful disobedience can result in thirty years of being out of blessing. When the Lord says, "Fear not, ...Be not dismayed," v.1: Then when we sin, we must confess your sins to God and forsake them. When you fail, refocus on God, deal with the problem and move on. God wants the lessons we learn from failures to make us better able to handle the same situation the next time around.

Joshua was told to take all the people of war, "Arise, go up." God gives strength for us to be cleansed, accept forgiveness and His strength. The only way to lose is to give up and quit. So, Joshua obeyed, arose and acted. They had been beaten but right away went about recovering lost ground. Joshua chose 30,000 men and commanded them to obey what was the mind of God. We can tell what kind of people we really are after the second and third attempt. Joshua was convinced and confident the plans of God were right and never questioned them in any way. That plan meant that some of them would openly flee from the combined force of Ai and Bethel for a distance. Humbling experiences deepens our awareness of our limitations and of our need of God. "Vain is man that trusteth in man." The feigned flight of a large part of the army before the enemy was needed for Israel's own learning. The were to carry out God's plan in His way. Purpose of heart and dependence on the Lord, are both needed in order for us to be successful in our calling.

A planned withdrawal and a pretended defeat were designed by God to teach His own people and to bring about victory over the enemy. The battle we are in is not won at the first sight of those who oppose the work of God or in the first Gospel effort we attempt. God is still on His throne and is still saving souls. We should not forget that fact. It is just that after a defeat, everything that opposes seems so formidable that we have a tendency to be timid rather than trusting. Recovering lost ground is one of life's most difficult problems. We must be very careful of anything that has a tendency to sidetrack us from the objectives of our lives. A vacation may be the time when we become entangled in some sins of the flesh that leads to some unholy practice. That in turn can cause us to lose our spiritual grip and power because we may seek to excuse our actions when were in a more casual situation. We need to hear the word of God and obey the written principles of His truth right away, and apply them vigorously in order to avoid disaster.

The instructions the Lord gave Joshua to conquer the significant stronghold of Ai were very clear. Take *all* of the people. Victory and unity go together in the things of God. "I have given" are the words that assured Joshua that the people, the king, the city of Ai and all the land, was theirs. This time instead of 3,000 the whole force of men was there to deal with this strategically positioned city. Some were for the ambush and some were for the bait. Joshua lodged among the people and rose up early in the morning. Joshua numbered the people and with the other elders with him, went up before the people and set them in order. The enemy was drawn out as the Lord, the Captain, had planned. The ambush worked and the burnt city was never rebuilt. The enemy was surrounded and totally defeated because God's people did what God said. In this battle the Israelites could keep the plunder as spoils of war. The idolatry of Jericho was of a nature that nothing could be kept lest it be made an idol again. Buried idols can always be dug up.

The strategy that the army was to follow called for discipline and order. The plans were precise and the details were given, and commanded, by the Lord. Obedience, knowledge and dependence on the Lord is fundamental to the Christian's life. This same pattern is followed by those who teach and practice military doctrine. The Lord said: "Stretch out thy spear," and Joshua obeyed and stretched out the spear and drew not his hand back. The principles of recovery were taught as soon as the lost ground was recovered. An unruly, uninformed, uncontrolled army is doomed to disaster. The leadership who had their faces to the ground in humiliation and confusion, was now going in front of a revitalized army of men under divine authority. Every leader needs to have experienced first-hand what he expects of those who follow him. The humiliating defeat taught Israel a lesson, and led to a victory which taught them another lesson. Setbacks occur, but they should not be allowed to keep us from doing God's will.

Anything that causes us defeat must be destroyed and the influence of it must be totally forsaken. When we face up to sin and what causes it, and deal with it scripturally, repent of it and forsake it; then we are forgiven and ready to move on in the strength of the Lord. Restoration is not just a private matter because it will be evident in a changed attitude and changed actions. There is no reason to allow the effects of sin to stop us permanently from going forward with God. Sin covered and left without being faced can ruin a person's whole life. Righteousness comes from submission to holy discipline carried out according to the word of God. Strength and purpose of heart leads to victory in the things of God, and leads to sacrifices that are acceptable to God, and genuine worship from His people.

**Joshua 8:1.** *"And the Lord said unto Joshua, 'Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land.'"*

### **AFTER EFFECTS**

It is a lesson well learned when we wait upon God -  
Waiting for His word brings clarity of thought.  
Accompanying thought, comes a "Thus saith the Lord,"  
And He gives the incentive to act, saying, "Fear not."

Then when the Lord commands, we know we are right  
To move ahead confidently, in the way He directs.  
Opposition that confronts, by His power is put to flight  
Wrongs are made right, when His will we do reflect.

It is not enough to stay, there work that we must do  
The promises of God require action on our part.  
"Stretch out the spear" indicates enemies will not go  
Unless we move forward and really make a start.

When God leads to start a work, He intends we go ahead  
Never holding back until the ground we're on is won.  
Then we can build an altar, so the people all can read  
The law of God, giving Him the glory, before the congregation.

Lessons learned in failure, may bring a good effect  
If we apply the Word of God to bring about a change.  
Punishment isn't the goal, real change is the intent  
After effects are positive, when we act in Jesus' name.

**"I learn daily, Father, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." There are often things happening I may not understand, except to know there is a purpose behind them. Thou art God, and I am not questioning why some unexplained work is a failure, or some effort we felt was of God, does not bear the fruit we had hoped for. My prayer is that I may be willing to let go of something that is not working for Thy glory, and that I will hang on to something that may not seem successful, but is according to Thy purpose. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **Joshua 8:30-35**

#### **MEETING ON THE MOUNTAINS**

The Israelites advanced thirty miles to the Valley of Schehem and were taught there the way they would be blessed and the way they would be cursed. There are no alternatives; no middle ground. Here was where God promised Canaan to Abraham. Jacob's well was here. This is where Jesus talked with the woman at the well. There with Mt. Ebal on the north and Mt. Gerezim two miles south, they gathered to do what Moses had commanded before he died [De.27]. It is a natural amphitheater where voices can easily be heard from one mountain to the other. Joshua built an altar to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings there on top of Mt. Ebal. Between the two mountains was the Ark of the Covenant. The altar was built here as a place of communion, worship, discipline and obedience. It was built out of uncut stones to prevent people worshipping the craftsmanship of the workers rather than the great works of God, the Creator. Victory does not mean that we can ignore the claims of God upon us. It is in fact, quite the opposite. In view of all God has done for us, we need to stop and consider the Great Cause of all our blessing - and remember our obligations are not done. Restoration leads us back to God where we again experience His grace and love.

We should never think we do not need to hear the truths of God again because we have heard them once. Truth needs to be at the forefront of every day's activities so we can avoid whatever deceit comes against us and every challenge we have to face. The law of liberty by which we conduct life is not something we can take or leave as we choose. The written truths of God's Word are given to us to practice in our Christian life to keep us from being "disqualified" as the apostle Paul so aptly stated. He submitted to personal discipline constantly "lest .... I myself be a castaway." When Israel reached the valley of Shechem they stopped to attend to something more important than to enjoy victory. There in full view of any who may have been watching, Israel was publicly placed under the authority of God's Word in a way that all could hear as well as see.

On top of the rugged, rocky Mt. Ebal, an altar of uncut stones was raised. There was no tool used to make each stone fit the next one. This was an altar raised to worship the Creator. This altar was unpolluted by the sin-stained hands of human endeavor. This was an altar that would identify the Israelites as true worshippers who were in fellowship with God. This first altar built after the nation entered the promised land,

was a declaration of their communion with God and submission to His word. Discipline had produced "the peaceable fruits of righteousness," and they were again acting in accordance with God's will. They had buried the king of Ai before the sun went down in obedience to God's law. Now they gathered to hear the word of God read and to see it written upon that rocky hill. The smoke of the burnt offering and the peace offering would be seen for miles around, and the inhabitants of the land would know Israel was publicly acknowledging their dependence on God.

We may never know the impact of our collective worship has on others who look on with questions unasked. It is enough that we do not "forsake the assembling of ourselves together," and we leave the effects of our obedience to the Lord to use as He chooses. One thing we do know, doing God's things in God's way is not going to be understood by those who do not submit to the discipline of God's word or obey it. "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." The failure of a past generation does not mean the new generation is doomed to failure. New Testament holiness is the same as Old Testament holiness because the Holy God is the same as He has always been. The difference between the Old and New is the motivation for holiness under the law of liberty is higher and greater because of God's grace and love rather than the fear of consequences when the law was broken. When we understand the blessings of this new liberty, we are glad to live holy, righteously and godly. That is one of our highest desires - to please God.

The ark of the covenant was placed in the valley between the two mountains. Half of Israel was on the side of Mt. Ebal and the other half on the side of Mt. Gerizim. The altar on Mt. Ebal was plastered over so that the law would not only be read in the hearing of all the people as Moses commanded, but was written when Joshua wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law, not with a graving tool on the stones but on the plaster. He wrote them in the presence of the children of Israel, and he read all the words of the law out loud before all the congregation --- men, women, little ones, strangers. The curses when read, were answered with loud "Amen's." It doesn't seem like "Amen's" were given when the blessings were read. The altar on Mt. Ebal was a reminder of the punishment for sin and forgiveness. The altar was a type of Christ who suffered for sin in our place of the curse. "Cursed is everyone who hangeth on a tree." Finally, after forty years Israel was gathered in this way to hear the word of the Lord in the presence of the ark.

Christian liberty does not free us from obligations and responsibilities to God's word and God's will. We have freedom from the law of sin and death by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The law, weak through the flesh, was condemned by God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and fulfilling its claims. To us who are Christians, the law of Moses is not an obligation to fulfill but a delight so we can know the will of God and do it "heartily as unto the Lord and not unto man." Christ has fulfilled the law on our behalf and God's justice is satisfied because the curse of the law is now gone. All the questions about should I do this or should I go there, and such like, are all answered when we go to the cross and learn, and remember, all that took place there. Our whole life as Christians is to be lived to glorify our Savior. That is what life is all about. We are finished with the law and its sentence, but we cannot avoid its standards. The new law of liberty we live by is not fulfilled in the energy of the flesh but by the Holy Spirit operating in us and through us. Holiness is not optional. Without it no man can see the Lord.

There is a price to pay for a holy, dynamic Christian life. There is more to being a Christian than having beliefs. Beliefs have to become actions. The law was written on the altar and the altar is the place where blood was shed, communion restored, and worship was given. Our blessings are greater than those of Israel, so our responsibility is greater. Because of them we act in holiness and find our joy in pleasing our Lord and Savior. The freed Christian desires to do the will of God. There is no neutral position for believers. We are either on Mount Gerizim or Mount Ebal. Now our sacrifices are more personal as we worship and serve Him. We don't bring animals or material things, but the things from our hearts that God cannot create. "The fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." That is the sacrifice of praise. There is the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart that God does not despise. There are other sacrifices that are in our capacity to give. Perhaps the most important one is that we "Present our bodies, a living sacrifice; holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable (priestly) service."

## **JOSHUA 9**

### **OPPOSITION**

It often happens when we have had a victory and a significant spiritual experience that Satan will seek to take advantage of our sense of well-being and complacency. There was recovery after defeat Sin had been dealt with, and God had given a victory in a very strategic location. Israel had seen the smoke of the sacrifices rising above Mt. Ebal. The ark was in the center of the people. The word of God was read and written. Surely when all was going right, we are able to go ahead with confidence. However, we need to realize we can always expect opposition if we are going to "live godly in Christ Jesus." Satan knows we are

most vulnerable when we are exhilarated by victory and think our fellowship with God is finally and permanently established. True we are positionally secure, but our spiritual condition is a daily matter. There is not a substitute for daily communion with God. We need God when we are at peace as much or more than when we are engaged in spiritual warfare. A battle won does not necessarily mean a victorious war. A battle lost doesn't mean everything is hopeless. As long as sin lasts, there will be conflict. No sin can be treated lightly. To compromise with Satan is to court disaster. The cause of defeat is discovered by prayer, but it takes more than prayer to recover lost ground. We do not subdue Satan in a sudden moment of victory. Faith and obedience to our Lord, are the secrets of victorious living. Israel was encamped at Gilgal as the well-planned conquest of Canaan was unfolding. Joshua had led the army right into the center of the land and the Lord had given victory in key locations. The north was now separated from the south and the leaders of the enemy buried their differences and came together in unity against Israel. When God is working His will through His people, there will be united opposition against anything that is against the world, the flesh and the devil. Joshua's strategy for winning was to drive a wedge west from Jericho into the center of the land, thus splitting enemy opposition. Then they turned south to deal with the southern foes. Lastly, they turned north to finish up dealing with the enemy.

This was not a hit-and-miss strategy. We need to apply divine strategy to daily living rather than live our lives in a hit-and-miss fashion. Far too often Christians just let things happen rather than live with disciplined action. The result is, many times we are out-manuevered by Satan who is a master at strategy. The roar of the lion is no more dangerous than the hiss of the snake. Joshua knew enough to talk to God before leading troops into battle. Open opposition will come when we refuse to compromise the truth of God in order to establish an ecumenical type of counterfeit Christianity. Satan promotes alliances between God's people and the world. He makes it seem so reasonable that any form of "Christianity" is okay and we should be part of it. It may not be exactly what people might say, but the deceptive motivation is that we will bring peace on earth ourselves when we make everyone happy.

This peace treaty seemed innocent enough, so Joshua and the leaders made this decision on their own. By failing to seek God's guidance, they had to deal with angry people and an awkward alliance. It is important that we understand that "with one accord," those who do not want biblical Christianity will align against those who obey the word of God alone. To accept the Bible only as our source of information for doctrine and conduct is not acceptable to nominal "Christianity." Satan unites the enemy by submerging secondary issues between them, to stop the advance of God's people. Every victory a Christian wins in his/her own life, is an invitation for an assault by the enemy. Blessings and battles go together. The Gibeonites came under guise of a long journey. They were wise enough to say nothing about Jericho and Ai. They referred only to the Israelites in the wilderness. The Gibeonites asserted they fully respected, honored and believed in the God of Israel. Satan knows that a committed Christian will not be deceived by an open frontal attack. The child of God seeking to go on for the Lord, needs to be constantly on his guard.

Satan knows overt opposition does not always achieve the objective he has when he goes about "as a roaring lion." Another tactic he used successfully in the past, and still does, is the subtle, deceptive hiss of the serpent to infiltrate right into the center of God's people. This covert opposition is more dangerous and much more difficult to deal with if we let our guard down even for a moment. He suggests there are certain parts of our lives that are very trifling compared to our devotion to the Lord. He suggests there are areas of life for which we have been given no command so "just go ahead; use your common sense; don't overdo it." He would declare himself to be a fundamentalist; a genuine Bible-believer who would not for a moment disbelieve in the Risen Lord and the Second Coming of Christ.

The Gibeonites introduced themselves to the "men of Israel," not just to the leadership of the nation. The unity of believers is very different than the unity of opposition. The leaders of the opposition made the decision to fight the people of God. Even though Israel was not a democratic society, the influence of those "men of Israel" who did not take "counsel at the mouth of the Lord," was such that even Joshua made the same mistake they had made before. Satan promotes alliances between believers and the world by having the people of the world use religious talk and apparent submission to truth in the energy of the flesh. The Gibeonites knew about the deliverance from Egypt and the defeat of two kings east of Jordan. But they did not mention the recent victories at Jericho and Ai lest their deceptive story of coming from a "very far country" be exposed.

Lessons for us: neglect of prayer always leads to trouble and destroys discernment. It suggests pride in our own judgment which is fatal. Things that may not seem to matter, can ruin one's life. The power of Christian living is lost when we give Satan one inch. Never trust your own judgment or think you can match Satan without God's help. When the pressure is on to act quickly, stop and refer everything to God in prayer. When you are in doubt, stand still. Never act until you pray. Even when we have made mistakes, the war can still

be won. Keep your word, integrity and principles and after confession and humility before God, He can still use you. The sin which bound us, may be the blessing that brings us to repentance, forsaking it, restoration and a more fully consecrated life.

Truly committed Christians know their need of God in the good times as well as in times of open opposition. We become complacent in self-satisfaction, and when we are lazy and indulgent, we are in danger of compromise. At such times when something unusual comes along, special care must be taken lest we act in haste and make a mistake that cannot be rectified. When people who profess to be saved approach an assembly for fellowship, we need to "try the spirits" to see who they are and what is the reason for their action. No matter what the saints as a whole think, those who lead God's people must take care to be guided by the Lord and His wisdom. It is easy to make errors in judgment when we use only our own wisdom. We forfeit real blessings when we try to add to our numbers by allying with those who come with a hidden agenda. It is incumbent upon us to seek wisdom from God in every incident and situation that arises. Our knowledge and experience, does not keep us from making bad moral judgments at times.

To "take everything to God in prayer" is a fundamental necessity in making decisions and forming judgments. God gives strength, courage and wisdom to endure opposition and see through deception. It is important to take time to carefully consider a matter, rather than to act in haste and suffer consequences that have to be lived with for a long time. It is not only unwise, but wrong, to act only on what we see. Careful consideration gives us times to see beneath the surface of a matter. In this way we apply lessons learned from mistakes in the past. These must be taken to consider all parts of a decision instead of rushing ahead.

Prayer makes us aware of the causes of defeat, our need and God's will as we apply the principles of His word to a matter. Prayer will provide for us the wisdom we need. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Neglect of prayer leads to lack of discernment. Neglect of prayer leads to pride of self and our accomplishments. Neglect of prayer leads to negative consequences that last a long time. Neglect of prayer makes important things seem trivial. We dare not trust our own judgment without consulting God in order to bring about peace. We can make serious mistakes that have consequences we will have to accept. Still, when we return to the Lord, He can use us. Blessings and battles are not far apart.

The Gibeonites lied, it is true, but I cannot do anything about what a person says, only my reaction to it. That is what I am responsible for. Often when we make inquiries into a matter, the replies are a mixture of lies with some truth. The Gibeonites indicated they believed in the God of Israel. Temptation and opposition in our lives indicate spiritual progress that Satan wants to stop. If everything in our lives is smooth and easy-going, something is really wrong. The enemy of our souls is not worried about us and what we will do.

Agreements and relationships entered into knowingly or unknowingly, have to be honored. Our perception may be clouded and that is why we need God and His word to guide us. What can we do when we have been deceived? Unintentional mistakes have consequences. To those, we need to apply biblical wisdom in an appropriate way to deal with them. God, through Moses had instructed Israel that those from far away who came to live with Israel, were to be servants. The Gibeonites were given menial tasks to do, and served Israel as bondmen, but their lives were spared. It is an important lesson for us to learn not to "lay hands suddenly" on any person. We need God in all of our decision making because opposition comes from many sources and directions.

**Joshua 9:14-15.** *"And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them."*

#### **A LEAGUE**

An axis of enemies - come together to make war

Usurpers think they are possessors

Never considering the eternal God - until now

Fear draws ancient enemies to a common purpose

All think - and say, the one thing, "Stop God!"

"Stop God's people - Stop God's purpose!"

An agreement of deceit - pretenders - deceivers "working wilyly"

An accord of lies - words spoken from fearful men

An accommodation of sympathy from lessons not learned

Counsel waits for a question - that never came

"The Wonderful Counselor" is totally ignored

His advice, counsel and commands never asked for.

An association of compromise - lies spoken by one, a poor covenant made by the other

“Act in haste, repent in leisure” is more than a catch phrase

The consequences of a hasty, unadvised choice have to be lived with

It is important to keep integrity, even when a mistake is made

A hard lesson to learn: never forget the Lord in decision making

His counsel is always the first to seek - before anyone else.

**“I fear there have been times, Father, when I have not taken counsel of Thee. Sometimes it has been that I thought the issue unimportant and I could handle it on my own. Other times it has been because I was afraid the answer might not be what I liked. Maybe I am getting more sense now, because I seem to be talking to Thee all the time. Please excuse my babbling at times. It is not in the sense of familiarity but in the sense of openness. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **JOSHUA 10**

### **GOD AT WORK FOR HIS PEOPLE**

Like the nation of Israel when they entered Canaan, so we in our day have to learn to conquer our foes and deal with opposition under divine control and power, before we can possess what we have been given. Quick fixes of sin-problems and heated reactions to attacks are not the way to victory. The loss of one battle does not mean defeat. Critical moments that arise, may be very decisive as far as the rest of our lives are concerned. Joshua had learned that "he that believeth shall not make haste," unless God directs them to. There are times for action and there are times for waiting depending on how the Lord Himself instructs us.

After Israel took control of the center of the land reaching beyond Jericho to Ai and Bethel all the way to Shechem, they waited for the Lord's guidance. In the central campaign, the decisive battles were Jericho and Ai. In the southern campaign, the decisive battles were at Gibeon and Beth-horon. In the northern campaign, the decisive battle was by the waters of Merom [Josh.11]. The first opposition came subtly through the deception of the Gibeonites. There are times when God is merciful to us in spite of our independent attitude, and will use us again. Sometimes by divine sovereignty, He will use a mistake to "fall out to the furtherance of the Gospel." Gibeon was a great key city in all of that land, and was well defended by mighty men. But God had brought a victory over those people in spite of Israel's failure.

Much of Christian living involves winning battles, great or small, during the course of daily living. The loss of one battle in the Christian life does not mean ultimate defeat. What we do at critical junctures, may prove to be decisive in wide areas of Christian experience. In the early campaign, disobedience and prayerlessness meant inevitable defeat. Now, in the southern campaign, new dangers and situations are matched by faith, action and ruthless uncompromising, daring warfare. This resulted in total victory. Five kings declared war on Gibeon who called for help from Joshua. Assured of God's promise of victory, Joshua came up from Gilgal, his base of operations, and defeated the enemy. One of the greatest battles in history, took place in which God intervened and lengthened the day so victory would be total and final.

When a sinner realizes their lost condition and seeks the Lord, there is antagonism towards them. Those who are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," are condemned in their own soul when one who is lost faces the fact that only the Lord Jesus Christ can save them. Hostility from those who know that person, even friends and family, is not uncommon. A coalition of five kings who ruled cities to the south was formed against Gibeon. Fear is a legitimate emotion when one is convicted of their danger. Fear itself does not bring salvation, but "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is not a bad thing when people are afraid to listen to the Gospel for fear they will be convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment and will be converted.

We need to remember who we are. The Israelites were no ordinary people, because the people of God were supported by the supernatural power of God and thus were to be feared. God's people today (the Church) are to be feared. Some unbelievers will leave a friendship because they are afraid to be associated with a person who is committed to holy living. Even coming into building where a Bible-believing and practicing church meets makes people nervous. There is fear lest they be converted. The people there are uncompromising in their testimony, courageous in faith, and holy in their lives. There is a sense of awe when the Lord's people meet and reverence is demanded by the presence of God. The believer is to be righteous in conduct, uncompromising in principles, passionate in devotion to the Savior, sacrificial in service and transparent in life. This should make something about the place where God's people meet, seriously impacting to those who come there. It is a good thing when the practice of truth tempered by grace produces a reverential fear. There was no battle until Joshua took the initiative and attacked. He did not hesitate to act quickly and righteously toward the Gibeonites who had lied to him, because the Lord said, "Fear not, for i

have delivered them into thine hand." Integrity demands that we keep our word in spite of what others may say or do against us.

When God gives His sanction to a thing, there is no reason to linger for our own purposes. There was a plan already in place and a strategy to follow in conquering the land. The all-night march and the quick attack were unexpected by the enemy alliance. Before the enemy could act, the Lord "discomfited" them, threw them into confusion, and they were destroyed by hailstones from above and the God-directed swords of the Israelites. Even the extended daylight hours, all combined to bring about victory over five kings and their armies all at once. Divine authority and divine intervention brought about one of the greatest victories of human history. This was so impacting; a poetic stanza was written in the book of Jasher. When the Lord Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church, He didn't say that the gates of hell would not come out and march against the Church. The gates of hell can not withstand the onslaught of a Spirit-filled company of God's people. It is important, and it is God's plan, that His people be on the offensive. We are not to run away, but instead, launch a full-scale offensive in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There will be times when we will be tested as to our word and integrity. We will be tested as to our leadership whether we will be compliant to God's directive or will make an excuse or delay a necessary action. We will be tested as to our honor, honesty and convictions. We will be tested as to whether we believe, and are willing to act on the word of the Lord, in spite of what other people may say or do. The key to victory for Joshua was "Gilgal," the place of the cutting off of the flesh. Gilgal was the place of remembrance: all God's people went down into death there when they crossed Jordan. It was the place of resurrection: they came with their leader into new life. As the place of renunciation: they cast off the carnal existence of the wilderness. Gilgal was the place of restoration because they were back in fellowship with the Lord. At the place of realization this was where they ate of the "old corn of the land." Finally, they had strong food from the land. It was here in the place of revelation where Joshua met the Captain with the drawn sword. The lessons of Gilgal need to be well-learned and reviewed.

Paul, the apostle, gave the key to a Christian's life and work. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." A believer needs to stay near the cross in order to know and retain our perspective in life and work. Communication with God is an attitude more than an act. The Christian life has its roots in Calvary. This is where we died with Christ and rose with Him; where we deliberately renounce carnality. Here we enter into living fellowship with the Lord. This is where we take the strong food of His Word to our hearts and realize all our faith begins as an understanding of what was accomplished there. We realize the Captain of the Lord of Hosts, who won the greatest victory ever, is with us. Gilgal reminds us there is an attitude we need to maintain. The lines of communication between God and us are to be maintained. The attitude and acts of communication between us and God, are the secrets of power.

The results of Joshua acting in faith initiated an act of divine intervention in which the Lord "discomfited" the ungodly coalition. He enabled His people to slay, chase and smite the enemy and continued to act on their behalf by sending the killing hail and extending the daylight to bring a victory that would never be forgotten. A victory like this had never happened in this way. Here when Joshua acted in faith in the Lord, the Lord acted in power for His people. We are not alone in spiritual warfare. God "hearkened" - listened to His faithful servant and the Lord "fought" for His people. The Lord helps, sustains and gives victory when we are in fellowship with Him. There is no protocol to follow in winning spiritual battles over spiritual enemies. In ourselves we are helpless and need God in every event.

The battle was not over until the five kings who had hid in a cave in fear, were brought out into the open where they were forced to lie on the ground with the feet of Joshua's captains on their necks so all Israel would know it was the Lord who brought the victory. To leave any sin hiding in a "cave" nearby, is to lose the victory. Sin has to be brought out, confessed, judged and forsaken forever. Nothing else will do. We need to put our feet on the necks of pride, materialism, compromise, jealousy and a critical attitude including every crippling thing in our Christian testimony. The Lord has fought for us and won the victory. In the same way the Lord won the victory at Beth-horon, and Israel was identified with the Lord "against whom ye fight", so we go beyond surrender to Christ and consecration to Christ's lordship, and declare war against all that is sinful in our lives. Satan will continually resist those who declare war on sin. We attack on all fronts by the power of God; maintain a constant attitude of fellowship with God; claim victory in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The five kings had to be hung. In the life of the believer today, we must be sanctified. We must triumph in Christ by never taking sides with sin; by being against everything that has to be judged in ourselves, condemned and confessed before God. Israel could see for themselves it was the Lord who brought about the victory but had used them. He is greater than any enemies or opposition we will have. All glory from any

victory belongs to God alone. Our praise goes to Him alone. Joshua had led the army in the way God had ordered. He did not debate, compromise or rationalize what God said. He simply obeyed God. That principle remains in effect for us today.

We should never allow relationships or activities that lead us into accepting sin or allowing it to gain traction at all. However, some alliances we have formed may make us think we are finished because of failure. God in grace worked for His people in spite of their past failure. In grace God led them to obey Him again, encouraged them with promises of victory, enabled them to believe His word and act of faith, and gave them success and victory. That order is still in effect today. The Lord used power He alone had and matched them with the united strength of His people.

Because we win one battle doesn't mean we will not be opposed again. Spiritual energy must continue to be exercised in order for enemies to be conquered. And even conquered enemies must be guarded against. The king of Hebron had died when Hebron was defeated, but a new king took his place and they had to be defeated again. We need to take steps in our lives to make sure old battles don't have to be fought again. Full obedience earned the reward of faith that is acted upon. God's word cannot be second-guessed or down-played. True self-judgment occurs when we return to Calvary after our victories as well as our defeats. Prosperity makes us self-confidence and negligent about the things of God if we are not careful. In order for me to live a victorious life as a Christian, I must be consistent, faithful, prayerful and trust God alone to do what He wants through me. I must take charge of my life and deliberately avoid and shun sin in spite of my wants and wishes.

**Joshua 10:8.** *“And the Lord said unto Joshua, ‘Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.’”*

#### **I HAVE DELIVERED.**

All may not be easy where the Lord leads His people -  
We are not home yet, there are battles to be fought.  
He never promised us that life here would be peaceful -  
But when enemies attack, He does say, “Fear thou not.”  
He has promised deliverance and I am just that simple  
To believe God means just that, so I'll wait and watch -  
Believing He wants me to go forward into battle -  
And He will act in sovereignty, I'll see what God has wrought.

I may not even know the foes when I see them with my eyes.  
Satan uses many means to achieve his evil ends.  
Implacable, this enemy will use murder, division - subtle lies,  
To take away any credibility and separate good friends.  
When I and fellow warriors against God's enemies defy -  
God acts on our behalf often using different means -  
Giving power and courage to press forward to the prize -  
And leads us on to victory when we on Him depend.

God brings the deliverance and uses willing men  
Who are not dismayed by an enemy that looks even greater.  
When we step out with faith in God, often it is then -  
He sends down “hailstones” to defeat those who gather  
Seeking to thwart God's purposes and plans -  
Thinking they are able to defeat the great Deliverer -  
Greater far than combined power of mortal men -  
For not only is He Deliverer, but “sun-stopping” Creator.

**“Almighty God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I am asking Thee to keep me from ever taking anything Thou will do for granted. I know there is no way I can fulfill the work Thou hast called me to do without Thy power. To see the changes in lives of people and know Thou art working in spite of my failures gives confidence to keep on with the work before us. I am asking for evidence of Thy presence in bringing about the necessary changes in others and me as a result of the ministry and Gospel preaching, we will be involved in these next weeks. Amen.”**

## **JOSHUA 11**

### **THE CONQUEST - THE REST**

After the high points in our Christian life and victories the Lord brought about, we need to return to the foundation, the root of our Christian faith. We need to remember the cross and the work of Christ on our behalf, not only when we are in difficulties that tend to discourage, but when things are good. In the shadow less light of the cross, we deal with the motives that direct our actions. It is then we search ourselves to see

if the world, the flesh and the devil are showing that we are acting in pride, complacency and compromise. We need to be reminded that the weapons of our spiritual warfare are not "carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."

Separation means we step out in faith in the word of God, and commit ourselves to obey Him. In order to do that we must refuse any strength and power the world offers. Our only Master is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Even when all the hosts of earth unite to stop the work of God, "In vain do earth and hell oppose, for God is stronger than His foes." God hears and honors those who honor Him in spite of the odds arrayed against them.

Kings from the north joined together under the leadership of Jabin, king of Hazor, to battle the Israelites who by now controlled the southern half of Canaan. Hazor was something like the capital of that area. There was obviously fear in the hearts of all the rulers involved. Yet, with the exception of Gibeon, not one looked for a way to make peace. The hearts of all of them was hardened against Israel and the Lord. One has said, "The same sun that melts the snow, hardens the clay." A great number of the kings gathered a huge force which included chariots and horses and camped at the Waters of Merom. Joshua was careful to obey all the Lord instructed him to do and God brought about victory. Joshua and the whole Israelite army attacked them by surprise. The enemies' chariots were useless in the dense forests of the area and Hazor, the largest Canaanite center in Galilee was destroyed.

We need to trust God in every matter we face because He knows all the facts about every place, every situation and every person. Joshua finished what Moses had started. Moses predicted in Deu.6:10-12, that Israel would occupy cities they had not built. Hazor was burned though, because it symbolized the wicked culture of the area. The total destruction of the city was a lesson to all other nations around. It is not easy to pick up another person's work and complete it in the way he intended at first. In assembly life and Gospel work, much of what we do is to continue the work others started or were responsible for and continue in the work just the way it was under the direction of those who were before us.

The conquest seems to have happened quickly by the short space in the book it takes up, but actually it took about seven years. The united army of Israel from the twelve tribes moved through the land and destroyed the opposing armies and kings. They were able to keep the plunder for themselves and the cities apart from Hazor became the homes of the Israelis. We often expect quick changes in our lives and quick victories over sin. It is easy to grow impatient and feel like giving up because things are moving slowly. All the victories were won by the hand of the Lord working for Israel and He drove out the enemies with horns and other means that indicated God was in control of all that happened in the conquest. However, the Lord remnants of people in different areas, to test the obedience of His own people. The possessions we have must be possessed. Each tribe had to take responsibility for what God designated was theirs. Not very often do things change overnight or in a short time. Every truth we have been taught has to be personally applied after we have heard the truth.

The Anakites were the giants the Israelite spies described when they first gave their report [Num.13-14]. However, this time the people didn't let their fear stop them from engaging the Anakites in battle and claiming the land. There were some left as Israel found out later (Goliath, of Gath). This is where united action in Canaan by Israel ceases. Their victories have been decisive. The enemy still lives there but they were beaten and scattered. God had given the whole land to His people. Now each tribe had to possess what it had potentially received through the conquest of the whole nation. Each tribe had to individually apply the lessons it had learned in united war to possess its inheritance. Their failure to take what Joshua had given and allotted to each one of them, was not a reflection on the power of God, but on them. Every truth we learn must be applied by faith and appropriated individually into our lives, or else it will mean nothing. The victory of the cross was decisive, but we only experience victory when we reflect on the truth we have received and make it personal. Joshua took the whole land – victory was complete – and he gave it to the people. Whether they received it or not, depended on their individual faith to go into it and possess it.

The land finally rested from war. The greatest source of conflict in our lives is in permitting things in our lives we know are contrary to the will of God. The moment we begin to obey, the soul rests from war. The victory the Lord Jesus won can satisfy every need. "He purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High." [Heb.1:3]. What the land was to Israel, Christ is to us. The land rested from war – the Lord Jesus Christ sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The victory of the cross has taken the whole territory. Jesus Christ is Lord because of Calvary. The rest of the Lord Jesus is not the rest of exhaustion, nor of inactivity but the rest of satisfaction. He sits in the full assurance; the complete expectation that the fruits of the cross will be reaped. The sacrifice of the cross has been demonstrated to be sufficient and complete for the salvation of the world.

The rest of the Savior is the calm, poise, assurance and satisfaction of a work completed – therefore, He is sat down. He is there as a man, for His fellow-men, and it is God's purpose that we should have that rest with Him [Eph.2:6]. We now can find the result of that rest when we learn to rest in His strength so that He may mold us and let the fever and rush of life subside into the rest of the Lord. The Christian who is resting in the Lord, is not a lazy Christian. He/she is busy and committed to the work of the Lord. The peace and rest are in our hearts that storms and challenges around us cannot disturb. The Christian who is resting in the Lord is calm in the situations of life and has strength to do whatever God's will is. When our will is no longer selfish, then our work is in harmony with the purposes of God. The Christian who is resting in the Lord, delights in the Lord and receives the desires of the heart [Ps.37:4]. Our Joshua, the Lord Jesus, has taken the whole land. All the fruit of Calvary is at the disposal of every one of His children. He is sat down on the right hand of God; the Holy Spirit is within; the Father is at the throne of grace. All of this allows us to live above the sin of the world, resting in Christ.

When sin has removed the "peace of God," that is the umpire of our soul, then we need the rest of forgiveness. That brings a sense of relief, acceptance and assurance that the long strain of strife and contention is over. That kind of rest brings about the lifting of a burden that was hard to bear. After long periods of spiritual warfare, the "rest for the people of God" is relief and joy. We may look back on those times, and trace with grateful hearts the hand of God that brought the peace and spiritual blessings for which we had prayed.

**Joshua 11:15.** *"As the Lord commanded Moses His servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses."*

#### **CONQUEST**

For seven long years the battles were fought  
The odds were against them but they never stopped  
Until the land God promised belong to them  
God gave Israel victories though with fewer men.

Obeying God is one thing we can control  
We commit ourselves deep within our soul  
To listen to His will and act on what we know  
Then He will act for us and His power show.

I cannot control what other people may do  
Nor can I demand what I think I am due  
But I can control whether I my Lord obey  
And if I will listen and act on what He will say.

It is within my power to rise and face the foe  
I can choose myself whether I will stay or go  
Victories take time for there is much land to possess  
And obedience is the key to God giving success.

Looking back over the land God has promised me  
I have a tendency to slack when things go slowly  
But He has promised never to leave nor forsake  
So by God's power and my obedience this land I will take.

**"O God of power and victory, I ask this day that the land to be possessed before us might be taken by the power of Thy grace. The enemies of discouragement and defeat are upon these people and yet I see a change already in the way they are responding to Thy Word. Help us to commit to obeying Thy leading in the work before us this day, that much glory will be brought to Thee and these people will be delivered from any bonds imposed on them by the circumstances they are in, and set at liberty. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Joshua 12.**

#### **POSSESSING OUR POSSESSIONS**

This is a summary of the conquest of the promised land that had such great potential for the children of Israel. The first six verses tell of the conquests and victories under Moses' leadership on the east side of Jordan. From verse seven through verse twenty-four, we read of the conquests under Joshua's leadership in the promised land itself on the west side of the Jordan River. Sometimes in our lives, it is good to sit down and reflect on what we have experienced and what has been done for us by the grace of God.

With a humble and grateful heart, take time to survey the years past and remember where the grace of God has triumphed. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." [Rom.5:20].

It seems like those on the east of Jordan were not committed to eliminating all of those nations that practiced idol worship and all that was associated with that. They gradually became assimilated into those nations and practices which they should have overcome. Moses was the leader at the time of that conquest. As a type of the law and what it can do for us, it is a reminder that though the law is good and holy in the purpose for which it was given, we cannot hold what we claim by our own resolutions. Our spiritual blessings can only be held when we are in fellowship with the Lord and are guided by the Holy Spirit of God. We do not have the power in our own strength to possess our possessions even with a mighty effort of our own.

To summarize in a fairly simple way: the potential of the 2 ½ tribes on the east side of Jordan who took little part in the national life of Israel was soon lost along with their inheritance. They became absorbed by the nations they were supposed to overcome. Moses, the law-giver, gave land that was ultimately lost to them. Anything we try to keep by the power of our resolution will ultimately slip through our fingers and we will inevitably fail. The deepest blessings of our spiritual life can only be ours in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. [Eph.1:3].

**Joshua 12:1, 7.** *"Now these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the river Arnon unto mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east: ... on the west... which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions;"*

### **POSSESSIONS**

Is there anything I can really call my own -  
Anything I'm not borrowing or paying interest on a loan?  
The ground I walk on certainly belongs to another -  
The house we built is taxed or we couldn't even stay there.

The children we claimed as ours - now they are gone.  
They were ours to nurture and care for until education was done.  
Actually they came to us as a heritage from God -  
But really, I hope they're His in thought and deed and word.

When I was young God gave me a wife of His own choosing -  
It is approaching 50 years of joy in life we're sharing  
So we are one together now but that will end some day -  
In heaven we are not married - there is a different role to play.

When God gave me life, I became a living soul -  
When by His grace, I was born again, as a person, I was whole.  
Now body, soul and spirit live - I'm alive eternally -  
I, in a sense, possess myself - I am God's, and I am me.

The things of my life intangible, those are the ones that are real -  
Not so-called "possessions" that I can touch and taste and feel.  
But things like hope that's sure - others I possess by faith -  
Many God-given possessions are the result of saving grace.

Eternal life - what a possession! Mine at highest cost -  
It is mine, now and forever - without it I'd be lost -  
God made it possible for me to possess this great possession -  
One of many given to me, when Christ's death made this provision.

In this land of Beulah, I can live in rest and peace -  
Enjoying my possessions, though this is not my final place.  
Here in this land of pleasantness while war goes on around -  
God Himself drove out the enemies, setting me on holy ground.

**"Gracious Father, Thy great and bountiful provisions for us has never ceased. Day by day all the unseen blessings from Thee have been given and are experienced with joy. Rest of conscience, peace in life, joy in the Lord, eternal life experienced daily: all these and so many more are mine. I am grateful for these and the temporal benefits Thou dost give as well. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**Joshua 13.**

## **UNPOSSESSED LAND**

Joshua was around ninety years old and had seen and experienced a lot since he was a young man in Egypt under bondage. He had experienced the miracles that had brought about the freedom, the crossing of the Red Sea and the miraculous survival of millions of people in the inhospitable wilderness. He had seen how close they came forty years ago to getting what they now had. He had seen all those who he had known in his youth buried except for Caleb. For about seven years he had served the Lord in a leadership role and had experienced being in fellowship with God as they conquered the land as a nation. Now each tribe had to possess what was theirs by walking over every foot of it, but as yet they had not done this.

To some of us, most of life's battles are over. To others, most of life's battles are yet to be fought. May we all be able to say when the journey is over, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." We are still able to serve God in old age with the benefits of wisdom and experience. Age brings the increased capacity of spiritual discernment. Discernment is a kind of knowledge that goes well beyond one's intellect. Age also gives a greater appreciation of spiritual life, the eternal life that we have received as a gift from God. We know that we have received that life when God saved us, but to experience eternal life as we live from day to day in fellowship with God in the little things of life as well as the great things, comes with experience and age. Spiritual truth as food for the soul becomes more real as we learn by experience the truths contained in the scriptures and apply them to the situations of life. Spiritual desires are like a thirst of the soul for God as we submit to the Lord, consecrate our life and all we claim for ourselves to Him, and appropriate each blessing by faith. Spiritual blessings are more easily discerned when we learn that not all blessings will make us happy at the moment, but afterwards we understand the reasons behind the blessings of difficulties. There is no need for us to live poverty stricken, defeated lives when we have learned by experience that "all things work together for good."

As we read in Joshua 13:1-6: There must be no resting on past achievements, otherwise God's purpose for Israel could never be realized. God had given them the land, but they must possess every inch of it. The method of possessing the land was to first survey it, then apportion it among the tribes, and last of all, leave each tribe to appropriate what was given it. What God intended the Israelites to have, with what they actually possessed, was very different. Never in all history did the Israelites achieve God's intention. Joseph's inheritance was given to the descendants of his two sons long before they possessed the land. Judah also received the biggest allotment because of his offer of himself for Benjamin. The rest of the land was given by lot and the boundaries were precise. The tribe of Levi had a proportion throughout the land of certain cities and land around them. Their portion was to serve God by serving His people.

What the land was to Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ is to us. The mountains give us views of heaven. The valleys may seem to be valleys of discouragement and despair, but they turn out to be valleys of divine blessing – green pastures and fertile fields. Our inheritance in Christ is not part of Christ, but all of Christ. Our possessions are only what we are willing to claim by faith. I am caused to stop to reflect: What "lands" are in my life that I have yet to conquer and possess? I fear I have used half-measures instead of laying hold of all the Lord has for me.

We never reach a stage of Christian experience when we exhaust all the possibilities of life in Christ. Not one of us has won every battle we have fought. There are times when we have been defeated. We have not fought every battle we should have. There have been times we evaded the enemy and chosen the easier path. These experiences of defeat followed by confession and assurances of forgiveness, give us the incentive to press on with Christ toward the goal. He never leaves us, but there is still land to be possessed.

## **AREAS WE NEED TO POSSESS**

Knowledge: this is distinct from intellect. Mental discipline, memory and observation can develop intellect. A person can have little intellect, yet have a deep discernment of spiritual truth that goes beyond the limits of intellect. A person can be informed but a fool in the things that matter most.

Another area to claim is spiritual experience. There are enemies, strongholds, habits and "kings" that are entrenched. Our peace is often disturbed by the raids of evil. He attacks us without warning, and in a moment when we have lost our temper, have spoken sharply and critically. In some cases, people are reluctant to admit to, and submit to the authority of the Lord over worldly associations and worldly friends.

We appropriate Christ by faith when:

We utterly submit to the Lord and surrender to His will.

We consecrate our life, talents, and everything we have, in every part of our life to the Lord.

We appropriate by faith the life God intends us to have.

We don't live in spiritual poverty; don't yield and fall to the pressures and temptations around us; don't get apathetic, complacent and lazy.

**Joshua 13:14.** *"Only unto the tribe of Levi He gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as He said unto them."*

#### **INHERITANCE.**

It belonged to another originally  
Another had paid its price  
For reasons known to the Giver  
It is now owned at least twice  
The reason the second owner has it  
The Giver chose to pass it on  
The inheritor only has to receive the gift  
It was purchased by another One.

An inheritance has a different value  
Not measured just by money  
Someone values you and puts it in your hands  
To Israel it was a land flowing with milk and honey  
Flowing in Canaan as Israel conquered promised lands  
To us the inheritance is from God  
Benefits and blessings to numerous to number  
Given us through Christ, our Living Lord.

How much is eternal life worth provided as a gift?  
Who can put a value on a gift paid by blood?  
Yet that is a down payment on all we will inherit  
When we are adopted and become sons of God.  
Heirs of God joint heirs with Jesus - glorious is the fact  
That mercy undeserved He freely showed to us  
Now we are made rich who once were very poor  
Inheriting spiritual gifts by His amazing grace.

**"Father in heaven, I am not deserving of any of the gifts I have inherited from Thee. "Peace with God" came at such an awful cost. The extended hand of mercy that reaches out in forgiveness, the cost of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," all of these inherited blessings are so far beyond measuring as to baffle my mind. But it does remind me that these have not been given for no reason - thank You for loving me! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **JOSHUA 14**

##### **LIVING THE LIFE**

God had determined the precise area each tribe should occupy. Each tribe then, was responsible to apply the principles the tribes had learned in united warfare. Each of the tribes was to take the possession God had given it and deal with those who had possessed it before in the way God intended. In like manner, when we refuse to accept our lot in life, we don't possess what God has for us.

There are many people who are discontented with their lot. Some are lonely because they are disillusioned. Their early hopes have been shattered. Ill health follows them and they seem incapable of doing what they wanted to do. Others have had a marriage they hoped would last for life, and now are stunned in a wrecked home with difficulties that are beyond their power to remove. Then some have lost their partner and are left with children and are crushed and totally alone. In any of these cases the temptation for resentment against God is real.

Deuteronomy 10:8-9 linked with Joshua 13:33 lets us know we do have a unique inheritance. "The Lord is his (Levi's) inheritance." Great honor was given to the Levites, for they were called to a life of worship. They had all the resources that belonged to the Lord. His power, His blessings – the Lord Himself was their inheritance. When we are called to serve the Lord, we share our life with Him. No relationship of secondary importance was allowed to hinder their communion with their God. Their interests were centered entirely in Him, and His service was to be undertaken without any distraction whatsoever. Levites were dedicated to serving God. They needed more mobility than a landowner could possibly have. Giving them land would mean saddling them with responsibilities and loyalties that would hinder their service to God instead. God arranged for the other tribes to meet the Levites needs through donations. Numbers 35:2-4 tells how the Levites were to receive cities within each tribal territory.

Levites were called to a life of work. They were to “stand before the Lord to minister unto Him.” Their work was in the sanctuary. They were intercessors – the greatest service in the world. They were called to a life of witness. They were to “bless His name.” They were channels for others to come to God and for God to come to men. The Levites were given forty-eight cities in which to live. They would come from the sanctuary of God filled with the joy of serving Him and the glory of His presence with the influence of the Lord upon them. In the sanctuary they brought men to where they could give to God that which was good and proper in worship and responsibility. In the cities in which they lived and in the cities of refuge they brought God to men. The honor allotted to the Levites was a life of worship, a life of work, and a life of witness.

God calls His people today to do the same. The call is for us to go for Himself and serve in all the world; to go into the sanctuary for men and go out into the city for God. The epistle of Ephesians is the New Testament commentary on the book of Joshua. “We have obtained an inheritance,” a lot, a portion obtained by God’s own plan. We are planned according to His purpose, planned according to His will that “we should be to the praise of His glory.” Our inheritance in Christ is matched by Christ’s inheritance in His people. Our possession of Him is to be matched by His possession of us. The land was divided exactly as God had instructed Moses years before. Joshua did not change a word. He followed God’s plans precisely. Often, we believe that *almost* is close enough, and this idea can carry over into our spiritual lives. We may follow God’s word as long as we agree with it, but ignore it when the demands seem harsh. But God is looking for leaders who follow His instructions thoroughly.

The voice of the minority is not often given a hearing. Nevertheless, truth cannot be measured by numbers. Often truth stands against the majority opinion. Truth remains unchanged because it is guaranteed by the character of God. At times, a person must even stand alone on the side of truth. God has the right to expect us to follow what he says in His Word because He says it, not because it suits me.

Caleb was a man of faith in a great God. His boldness rested on his understanding of God, not on his confidence in Israel’s abilities to conquer the land. If he had agreed with the majority, he would have disagreed with God. Often, we base our decisions on whatever everyone else is doing. We are not first-order cowards but get a second-hand cowardice like Israel. The questions like “What do my friends say?” or “What does everyone else think?” are not the right questions but we should ask rather, “What does God say?”

Caleb was a spiritually deep, simple, uncomplicated man who believed in his God. Those character traits are the secrets of his greatness. He believed in a great God. He was one of the spies sent by Moses to survey the land of Canaan for six weeks forty years before. He was one of the two adults who left Egypt and entered the promised land. He was willing to voice the minority opinion in favor of conquering the land and openly expressed his faith in God’s promises, in spite of apparent obstacles. For 45 years the promise of God was in his heart in the wanderings, toil, conflicts and dashed hopes of an unbelieving nation. The faith he had in his youth was undiminished in old age. We don’t want to be content to merely survey the past, but be ready and eager for fresh battles with the enemy so we can enjoy what God has promised and live in fellowship with Him.

Caleb was never found among the grumblers, skeptics and unbelieving people who were swayed by the pressures of opposition or faithless brethren. He was never one who had a hankering for the leeks and garlic of Egypt. He was never found among those who disobeyed God or among those who turned to idolatry. He was eighty-five years old when he went after the three giants that were in the portion of land allotted to him. Caleb wholly followed the Lord, and he completely drove out the enemy. The blessing he received was never wasted. He had a portion to give to his daughter and her husband in the dry southern part of his inheritance. He gave them the upper and nether springs to make their crops flourish in spite of the hot climate. The blessings of his life overflowed to other people, and he opened it to spiritual blessings for others.

In old age, we have the ability to pass on to others the blessings we have received. The grace of God experienced in life, may often be seen in the radiance of a life lived for God. Caleb’s secret was simply a love that never waned. Caleb’s heart wasn’t captured by the valleys full of plenty. The place he wanted was Hebron. Abraham had pitched his tent here. God had spoken face to face to Abraham here. God promised the land to Abraham here. “Hebron” conveys the thought of fellowship, love and communion. It is the place all of us must seek and find. In Hebron Caleb had caught a glimpse of the reward of discipleship. He saw the place of communion, of fellowship, of God’s infinite blessings, and regardless of the cost and hardship, he pressed on until Hebron was his.

**Joshua 14:12.** *“Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake of in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.”*

#### **GIVE ME THIS MOUNTAIN.**

The road map of a life of eighty-five years was easily seen upon his face,  
Yet his strength was obvious in the stance of his body -  
His arms and legs firm and strong -  
Full of confidence in God, he stood before his leader -  
Strength of character etched in a face full of experience of living for God.  
The promises of God deep in his heart and his understanding of God is seen -  
A peaceful, yet bold approach to claim what God had promised -  
“Give me this mountain.”

His faith was in a great God while the majority doubted and feared.  
His desire was not for ease even at the end of eighty-five years,  
The walled cities; the tall, huge men were not intimidating -  
He knew the character of his God.  
He was standing firm on the truth of God, not opinions of men -  
And God gave him boldness beyond that of the majority.  
His decision is based on the truth of God's promises -  
“Give me this mountain.”

Right and wrong cannot be measured by the voices around me.  
An accurate measurement of truth does not come from fearful men.  
The same God who gave Caleb boldness - gave me eternal life -  
And He who was faithful to that old man, is faithful still.  
Courage and faith are only effective when  
Combined with words and actions,  
They are used to act on the promises of God -  
“Give me this mountain.”

In this place of past blessings and scenes of past victories -  
There are obstacles that are tall and strong.  
Fainting and fearful men are surrounding me -  
Words of pessimism and defeat long for days in the past -  
Times when God promised and went before us driving out the “Anakims.”  
I must never rest on accomplishments that God allowed as if that is all -  
For there is land to be possessed; cities to be taken - even yet at the end of life -  
“Give me this mountain.”

**“Father God, this morning I am looking out on a place where You brought victory forty years ago. Remnants of that time of rejoicing and faith still remain but the sound of singing is faint and the voice of confidence is now the voice of pessimism. O gracious God, hear my prayer on behalf of these people and this place and revive the spirit of faith and confidence in God - even this very week. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

#### **Joshua 15**

#### **THE BORDERS**

To know where we belong and not try to go beyond that, is a great safety feature for the people of God. There will always be beautiful vistas and scenery that is pleasing to the eye and will make us think, "I like this. I would like to live here." However, it won't be long until another scene as attractive or more so, that will catch our fancy. This whole world is a remarkable work of divine creation so that wherever we look every person is left without excuse regarding the existence of God. In a similar way that which attracts the spirit of a child of God opens vistas of truth and opportunity to us. So how do we know where we should be and what we are to do in our lives and service for God?

The children of Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh had land previously designated to them by Moses because of the actions of their forbearers. Then Moses gave an inheritance to Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh on the east of Jordan because they were satisfied with less than they could have had as far as fertile land. They never did get rid of all the inhabitants of the land where they lived and more or less assimilated into a mixed culture. The Levites knew their places of dwelling would be scattered among all the tribes because of the nature of their calling and the unique work God gave them.

Some of God's people realize their obligations where they and generations before them lived. They know that for which they are responsible to maintain. The borders of their lives, and the work they are called to do is very clear to them. It may be by virtue of personality and talent, linked with God-given gifts that there is no question as to what their role in life is and where it should be exercised. Some people may say to them, "Why don't you leave here and go somewhere else where there is more excitement and you get more profit from what is going on?" But when a person knows their own borders, they are not enticed by the things offered in other places because they have a heritage that has been given to them to keep. Their heritage, both physical and spiritual is of great value to them because they understand it has been given to them by God. Their attitude is, "This is where God placed me. This is where God has blessed me and those before me. This is where I will stay by God's grace."

Others are called by God to reach out to "regions beyond" with the Gospel, and in order to do that, they have to move and claim new ground. When this is directed by God, the motivation will be to carry out the divine commission and see a new work established. New assemblies have been established by God when He moved the hearts of some to go a little farther out, in fellowship with those of their home assembly. When that happens, the spiritual borders that are put in place in the new work are still designated by God. We don't have the right to say, "Now we will do things our way." It is God who establishes borders.

When some who the Lord of the harvest directs to go to different cultures or lands move ahead in faith, the boundaries in which we preach and teach are still those God gives. There will be some differences in methods that are more acceptable in a different society, and the social life may be strange and different. But the borders of the message remain the same. They have been established by God. The standards He has set for morality, preaching, teaching and worship are universal. God has placed "eternity in their hearts" for all people, and within that context we must stay.

Everywhere God's people will go, there will be constant attempts by the world, the flesh and the devil to compromise our borders. Spreading division and discontent with what God has given us has always been a hindrance to the children of God. In every society the godly life and walk of one who stays within the God-designated borders of their life, will make other people uncomfortable. It is in the heart of man to be independent of God and claim for ourselves what we should never have. But when one is in the family of God, we want to please our gracious Father. Instead of resenting grace that reminds me of my limitations, we embrace God's grace and appreciate it more as life goes on.

We need to be content to stay within the borders God has designated and make sure that where we are, we remain in fellowship with Him. If we are not careful, we may allow those things of the old life a place within our borders and the "Jebusites" can be a continual problem to us and the work of God to which we are responsible. To claim the promises of God, we need to set our "foot" on every piece of holy ground placed within our borders.

It will be a cause for great joy when our sons and daughters come of their own volition and desire from us part of that which God has given us. To be able to pass on even a small portion of the high ground God gave us for the benefit of future generations is a reason for us to remain faithful and stay within the borders God established. Caleb must have been delighted when his daughter and her hero-husband wanted some of what he had. It may not seem important sometimes, until we realize anew that our borders have been defined by God. He knew what was best for us and made it possible for us to personally claim every part of what He intends us to have.

**Joshua 15:11.** *"And the border went out unto the side of Ekron northward: and the border was drawn along Shicron, and passed along to mount Baalah, and went out to Jabneel: and the goings out of the border were at the sea."*

#### **BORDERS.**

The plans of God are not obscure or unreasonable.  
They are not demanding of me to do something unreachable.  
He simply wants me to be obedient and teachable,  
And He will act in ways and times most seasonable.

He gives His instructions in words that are easily definable,  
And makes them known to me in terms most plausible,  
Not asking me to act in ways or do a work of which I am not capable,  
But makes things precisely known that to me seem sensible.

The borders of my life and work are to be scriptural,  
And the calling to His service is to serve in ways workable,

Although I must not be harsh and demanding, but pliable,  
I should prepare myself and for my calling be knowledgeable.

It is up to me to be always be ready and available,  
To do a work within the boundaries of what is reasonable,  
And whether that work leads to strife or is peaceable,  
I must obey Him or else I will be held accountable.

God's service and harvesting work is always doable,  
Although the sins of those we work among may be terrible,  
Yet as stewards of this work I must always be found faithful,  
And in carrying out His work I must be always honorable.

**"I know there are areas of service that are not in my calling, Father God, and I pray that I will be given by Thee the wisdom to not impose myself into them. Also, I am asking for common sense to know when to press ahead and when to stay back and consolidate what Thou hast given. I am not sure at times, whether I am shirking my duty by not going into new places. I thank Thee for giving me the privilege of working in the Gospel in new places this coming summer with younger men. If this is the way I am to serve Thee in new places, give me the sense to be a follower rather than trying to lead. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Joshua 16**

### **JOSEPH'S DOUBLE PORTION - BUT...**

To some who didn't know their history, it may have seemed unfair that Ephraim and Manasseh got the largest portion of land in the northern part of the country as well as land east of Jordan. But they would be informed that Joseph's two sons took his place as Jacob's sons and the Levites became a serving people acting on God's behalf for the people, and on the people's behalf before God. Now four hundred years later this was the reward of Joseph's offspring because he had preserved the nation's identity. We may not always grasp the importance of an event in life nor see the future benefits of a particular action we take. But God, who lives in an "eternal now," sees everything through the eyes of His own divine purpose.

The best we can do in times we don't fully understand, is to do what we do "with our might as unto the Lord and not unto men." Then we leave the results to God to accomplish His purposes and rest in faith that His will is being done. It may seem like we have done our best, and yet leave some things undone because of our weariness or lack of motivation. We need to remember there are consequences to every action or lack thereof, that cannot be avoided, and with which we will have to live and endure.

Failure to deal completely with a matter in the way we should have, leads to problems later on. The "children of Ephraim and Manasseh" had been given a great privilege and the benefits were obvious. But for some reason they did not drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer, but kept them as laborers to serve them. The serious problems they had in the future because of this lack of total commitment, was that there was a pagan people in their midst who worshipped idols and served the false gods the idols represented.

We cannot accept the mixture of spiritual truth and falsehood that appeals to the world. It may seem like it is easier to live in this compromising situation, but it is only a spiritual twilight that confuses everyone to the extent that we hardly know right from wrong. Problems will remain as long as the people of God try to coexist with the children of darkness. The light of the Gospel of the glory of God exposes every evil way of the powers of darkness. When we walk in the light as our Lord is in the light, we will have fellowship with God's people. That will mean there will be a separation of that which is of God and that which is unclean. There is a cost to receiving a double portion of God's blessings that we cannot avoid paying.

**Joshua 16:10.** *"And they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute."*

### **SERVE UNDER TRIBUTE.**

It doesn't seem bad to some at this time and place  
To make room for anyone to occupy this space  
God intended for His own people alone  
Who have given Him first place to sit on their life's throne.  
But it is wrong when those who do not belong to the Lord  
And who do not read or even care for His Word  
To be a participant at a table set  
For those who know and willingly admit

They are there saved only by redeeming grace  
And obey His commands, and come to seek His face.

A seat outside that circle of favor  
Is not a rejection of the person, but rather;  
A place where they can look and learn  
Why it is important they never God's grace do spurn  
But by watching and learning they soon will know  
Whether their profession is real or it is just for show.  
There is the right on the part of all to look for fruit  
To not to come there paying some form of tribute  
Like so many around who always ask for money  
Taking what they can get from ten dollars to a penny.

Those who think tribute, whether a tithe or an offering  
Is a way to help compensate for all of Christ's suffering,  
Are insulting God who paid the highest price  
That those who repent, and have been born twice  
May enter into the good of all God has provided -  
How terrible it is to think they have somehow added  
To the price of redemption by a tribute they pay,  
And hoping that God in a future judgment day  
Will look on their tribute as some kind of penance,  
Instead of putting faith in Christ following true repentance.

If into a fellowship a "tribute-payer" comes in -  
Never having repented nor accepted God's provision for sin;  
Give him a learner's seat and tell him you are glad he is there,  
And as he looks on hopefully, he will start to really care  
As to why Christ died on the cross of shame,  
Making full payment and accepting the blame  
For all the sins we have committed,  
And the righteousness that is His has been imputed  
To those who trust in Him alone and are fully freed -  
And as for the tribute money - there is no need.

**"O God of all grace, thank You for bringing me into a place of nearness as a member of Your family. There are those who seem to think everyone has a right to participate in holy things as long as they are willing to contribute some finances to the work of the Lord. May we never get to the place where money is an issue of acceptance in Thy assemblies. The work is Thine. Help me to be on guard to give a reasonable explanation of what a New Testament church is whenever someone unknown to us comes in to our meetings. Help me to be Christ-like, compassionate, understanding and helpful to them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **JOSHUA 17**

### **LIVING TO CAPACITY**

Two contrasting attitudes were seen in Israel toward the settling of the promised land. Caleb took what God gave him and moved ahead with enthusiasm in spite of his age to fulfill God's plan for him [14:12]. He was confident that God would help him drive out the wicked inhabitants and he would soon fully occupy his land [15:14-15]. In contrast, the two tribes of Joseph were given rich land and lots of it, but they were afraid to drive out the inhabitants and take full possession of it. Instead they begged for more land. Joshua asked them to prove their sincerity first by clearing the unclaimed forest areas. They agreed but failed to carry through [Ju.1:27].

In the closing section of the book of Joshua, the land was apportioned among the tribes by lot. The tabernacle was erected in Shiloh in the center of the country. God's presence was in the midst of His people. It is the Person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ Himself we worship when we gather together on the Lord's Day. We don't worship an ordinance or a church [Mat.18:20], but we are a called-out people who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ and are separated to Him 24/7.

When it came to claiming the land, the portion of land each tribe was allotted, corresponded to the position it had been placed in relation to the tabernacle during the journey through the wilderness. Following that pattern, in the same way, each of us is given grace according to the gift which God has given us. We do not have grace to match someone else's gift. We have been placed in the body to function as God intends and knows is best for us, for others and for His divine purposes.

Complaints and comparisons are not uncommon among the people of God even today. The tribes of Joseph believed that they were a great people and complained that hadn't received a portion worthy of their greatness. They boasted that past blessings through their ancestor Joseph justified a greater reward for them. They suggested they were too big for the little bit of land they were given. The Canaanites were entrenched in the portion given to Joseph's tribes and this so called "great people" were afraid to drive them out. They thought because they had shared in the conquest of the land, and because Joshua was one of their tribe (Ephraim) that they were great. The truth was they were proud, and that is a very different attitude from that of Joseph. The Holy Spirit lights up our true selves and assesses our own worth. The real value of Christian character is not assessed by church attendance, reputation as a Christian in some famous organization or even by the respect other people may have for you. The true value of a believer is measured by faithfulness to the Lord and a consistent walk of holiness of life. Some complain they don't have enough scope for their abilities and seem discontented with their lot. They feel they are victimized by their circumstances and should move to where things are not so frustrating and restricting.

What is the best way to go about dealing with complaints? Joshua said in essence, "Go to work. Cut down the trees that cover the fallow ground and use that land." Their complaint still continued so he told them that if they were a great people, use their power and drive out the enemy from the valley. It is the same way with us. Get rid of any dead wood you have in your life. The impossibilities that face us are all within the power of the Holy Spirit to deal with. What blocks our vision and progress? What robs us of victory? Do the work we can do, in the place where we are with our might and let our progress be seen for what it really is. We need to cry to God that the Holy Spirit will give us strength for the task and that He will increase our capacity to fulfill that which God has allotted us. The greater the obedience, the greater the discipline, the greater the faith and the more allegiance to the Lord we have, the more we are capable to expand and grow to be what God intends.

**Joshua 17:18.** *"But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong."*

#### **HALF-HEARTED.**

Caleb, the brave, was grateful for land of his own,  
Though giants still lived in the land.  
It was near the desert where he made his home,  
Strengthened by the Lord's mighty hand.

Joseph's children were of a different stamp,  
Though the land they received was good.  
They complained of their lot, of what they had  
They didn't want to work to cut down the wood.

God has given many blessings to us,  
Far too numerous to count at a glance -  
Yet they're ours to claim without a fuss,  
Nothing has been given us by chance.

God makes provision and it is mine to apply  
Myself to the work to make it my own.  
It takes time and effort to remove from the way  
Any obstacles that would hinder my growth.

Joy is for me with a price to be paid -  
That is easily within my grasp to obtain.  
The cost is not high; I must just obey  
And His joy He gives me to claim.

If I am half-hearted in my response to His will,  
I will never be able to enjoy  
All that is mine, and the blessings that still  
Await my labor to employ.

In faith I must lay hold on the promises of God,  
In order that my life will be full.  
When I go to the mountains to cut down the "wood,"  
Then I know there will be riches there still.

**“I fear a casual approach to my Christian life, O God, knowing that an attitude of laziness will affect every part of my life. Without enthusiasm and a sense of urgency, I can become very complacent and self-satisfied. May I never take any of Thy blessings or provisions for granted as if I deserve any of them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **JOSHUA 18**

### **PRINCIPLES TO APPLY**

We can never rely on past decisions or mountain-top experiences to give us the principles of Christian living. We may learn from those but most of our lives are lived in the hum-drum of everyday life. Missionaries, Christian workers of all kinds with great expectations and high motivations, spend much of their lives in daily chores just like everyone else. Most times people are not clamoring to come to Christ for salvation, so there is the constant need for doing the same things over and over until the labor bears fruit. We can live in the land of joy and spiritual power. There are certain things we must avoid in order to enjoy this full life.

We must use what we already have and do what we already are able to do first, and then we will find out if we are able or qualified to be trusted with more responsibility. Often there are things we allow to remain in our lives that make it easier to live in the world but really blocks our possessing the blessings of life on holy ground. Anything that blocks our spiritual progress and fellowship with God and His people, needs to be gotten rid of. The greater the obedience, the greater the discipline in life. The greater the discipline, the greater our faith is in God. The greater the faith, the greater is our commitment to the Lord. The greater our commitment, the greater is the grace of God seen in our lives. The greater the grace, the smaller one becomes in his own eyes.

The tabernacle was moved from Gilgal to Shiloh in the center of the country. Even though that is where God's presence was in the midst of His people, it was not a godly city. It did make it easier for the people from all directions to come together for the seven feasts of Jehovah and the events surrounding those feasts. There the ark remained through the time of the judges of Israel until the Israelites took it into battle and it was captured by the Philistines. The testimony of an assembly may not be in the most admired place, and surely, we are not the most admired people. Yet it is our privilege to be associated with the name and Person of our Lord Jesus Christ wherever His chooses to place His name. People around may say, "Why do you go *there*?" in a manner that is derogatory as they compare who we are and where we go with what is popular as admired by the world. We need to remember, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

Another principle to remember is that no matter how attractive and appealing the world is and its ways, whether in business, society or religion, the "Canaanite" world is still not that with which we should be taking our guidance, nor should we copy its ways. The path of least resistance may be the path of highest cost to one who is a child of God. We may think it is the easiest way to deal with a matter or conduct some business by contracting with those who do not live or practice biblical principles, but their influence and the end result will bring us down to that level. Some of the Israelite tribes did not destroy the threat others had against them because they would rather others do for them what they should have done for themselves.

Many of us don't gain the promised blessings of God for those who live by faith in the grace that God has given us through Christ, because we don't like the cost of self-denial. To sacrifice some favorite habit or sin keeps us spiritually slack and easily satisfied with past achievements. This robs us of blessing and may even hinder other people and give place to the devil. We need to be like Paul and "press for the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Do we really expect God to bless us, or are we yielding to spiritual inertia?

Joshua said to the children of Israel, 18:3. "*How long are ye slack to in to possess the land...?*" There was a description made of the land by three men of each tribe and then lots determined which tribe would get each portion. It is an interesting observation that in this way the land and the tribe to possess it was a match made by God to suit. Benjamin was promised to dwell in safety... "between His shoulders," [De.33:12] if they possessed their land. A safe place to be! Benjamin's land was a buffer zone between the northern and southern tribes. Issachar would receive "treasures of the ocean and jewels of the sand." Some of the greatest blessing of grace and character are promised to the Christian. Asher's land would be full of winepresses and would be strong. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." [De.33:24-25]. They would be fresh and strong. The child of God today has the oil of the Spirit to get strength and power for every situation in life. Naphtali would be full of the blessing of the Lord. All of the Israelites would be greatly benefited if they possessed the promised inheritance. Each of the tribes was suitably adapted to the place where their lot fell.

That principle still applies to us. God knows each of us and how best we can be used in the kingdom of God. It is His divine prerogative to place us where He wants in order for us to do what He wants.

**Joshua 18:3.** *“And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, ‘How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you!’”*

#### **INERTIA**

Why are you waiting still? There is much to do.  
Jobs are waiting to be done - boring it is true -  
But your possessions are there for the taking -  
Rise up and claim them - time is wasting.

The tasks that lie before you no doubt are large -  
Rewards that are promised you by God are huge.  
Not all of life is lived on mountain-tops with ease -  
Blessings are waiting there for you to move ahead and seize.

Difficulties are awaiting your labor to remove them -  
Promised land is waiting for you to step on and claim.  
You don't have to go it alone - many are near to assist -  
Don't procrastinate or your great opportunity will be missed.

Take hold of the advantage and stewardship of your time -  
Discipline yourself, plan, focus - take control of your mind.  
Benjamin, you will be safe dwelling between God's shoulders -  
Issachar, you will have jewels of sand and treasures of oceans.

All around you and just ahead; there - use your strength -  
And all you lack; you will find God will provide full length  
To meet all, and more than you need to live -  
When you discipline yourself, you will get way more than you give.

**“O God, my Father: the land is here before me and much is waiting to be claimed and settled. These villages and cities have a lot of human souls needing Thy salvation. Yet I know that I can not do this myself. It seems to me that what we are doing here is the right thing. In trying to equip these people to meet the needs of their own areas, I pray that Thou wilt give me, and those with me, the right messages and right words to pass on from Thee that they will be able to get up and claim their possessions. I pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

#### **Joshua 19**

#### **BOUNDARIES AND ORDER**

There are ways to measure growth in the life of a Christian that can help us maintain consistency and order. We are not a bunch of free-lance people who can do what we want, how we want and where we want. We live under divine authority when we own the Lordship of Christ. Order is maintained when we know our objectives and the goals are clear to us. Before us are the "marching orders" and the promises when the work is accomplished. Established boundaries for the people of God were important in the ancient past and we can learn valuable lessons from those principles that have been tried and proven.

The boundaries that were defined when those thirty-six men went over the land, had good reasons to be identified. Rather than one big open country with everyone vying for the best places for themselves according to the will of each one, there were twelve distinct areas in which people were designated property according to their tribal heritage. Tribal ownership promoted loyalty and unity among each distinct group. Areas of responsibility and privilege within that group were easily identified. That would help the development of the tribe and its possessions in a righteous and mature way. People would be kept from acting like immature children each wanting the best for themselves and claiming more than was their right. Conflict would be reduced because the area for each family to choose from was limited to a specific geographical location defined by the boundaries. This practice fulfilled the promised inheritance that went all the way back to Jacob's words in Genesis 48.

Boundaries and order in the Christian life will keep us from going backwards and doing things in the ways of the world. Daily obedience to the Word and faith in God lead us to living up to our capacity as children of God. Our spiritual capacity can actually increase as we learn how to live in the land we claim and take advantage of the promises of God. It is important for us to "walk and please God more and more," and consequently we will love one another "more and more."

Some of the land had already been designated such as the portion of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh on the east side of Jordan. Judah's land had been promised long before along with the other half of Manasseh and Ephraim's land in the center and south of the country. When the order of the rest of the land was being determined by lots drawn, the first one was Benjamin placed as a buffer between Ephraim and Judah who later would be separated. Simeon's land in the south was second to be drawn and this included the use of some of Judah's large inheritance for the use of Simeon's people. Zebulun, Issachar, Asher and Naphtali were designated land by lot with boundaries in the north part of the promised land. Dan had a small portion in the middle of the country but there was not enough for them all, so Dan went to the far north east of the country and crossed the river to take Leshem. Leshem was renamed, Dan, so the phrase, "from Dan to Beersheba," meant the full extent of the country from the city of Dan in the far northeast to the city of Beersheba in the southern desert. Dan had two parts separated by a lot of miles.

We are not able to measure the value of a thing or a work only by its size. In the eyes of God, that which seems important to us may really be of little value. That which we would be inclined to discount, like the widow's two mites, may have great spiritual value to God. A "word in season," may have more lasting value than a whole series of sermons. One act of kindness may produce results that only God can measure. It is our responsibility to know the boundaries God has given to us for our benefit, and leave other efforts in other places to those to whom God has placed the responsibility for that work. When we maintain a spiritual order in our work in a responsible fashion, we can confidently leave all the results to God.

**Joshua 19:51.** *"These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So they made an end of dividing the country."*

#### **AN END**

Important decisions are being made -  
People are going to live with the consequences.  
Their families and generations to come will be affected -  
All of God's people are going to be affected and traditions are formed.  
Do this before the Lord!

There are, and will continue to be complaints -  
Everyone is not going to be completely satisfied -  
But don't let that stop you from the serious work you are doing -  
It has to be done and you are not acting alone, independently, arbitrarily -  
Do this before the Lord!

The priest is there to give the spiritual input -  
The warrior-leader is there to keep things practical -  
The recognized leaders of families are there to represent other's opinions -  
The lot is there to be cast as discussions are concluded and a decision has to be made -  
Do this before the Lord!

Lives will be affected by what you do here -  
Loyalty and unity will be promoted by your decisions -  
You are designating areas of responsibility and privilege -  
Those who know what their work is and what is expected, will develop and mature -  
Do this before the Lord!

Here at Shiloh, what you are doing has great impact -  
The decisions you make will reduce potential conflicts -  
The boundaries - the limitations will actually fulfill rather than restrict  
The expectations of the people - they know now where they belong - what is expected -  
Do this before the Lord!

**"Holy God, I know leadership is a burden to many of my brethren. They don't seem to be able to understand the consequences of the decisions they make. Many decisions are made quickly without dialogue and careful consideration with their peers. Please help the leaders of our assemblies to consider they are not to act alone but with a spiritual view, a practical view and an emotional view of the effects that will result from their decision. Most of all - help them understand their action and decision is done before the Lord. If there is any way I can help to bring this about, please make that course of action clear to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**Joshua 20**

## THE CITIES OF REFUGE

Six cities were designated as safe zones to which people could flee and find refuge if there was an accidental death or a crime committed that had to be judged by the leaders of the city. These were accessible to all of God's people although it may call for an urgent journey of quite a few miles to escape from one who was wanting vengeance. These were a place of refuge for anyone who unintentionally killed someone [De.19]. For a man to live in guilt because of ignorance is completely unnecessary. God has made a provision for forgiveness for the unintentional hurt and harm we may have caused others. Confession of our guilt and restoration to God enables us to live free in perfect faith, because our High Priest lives for us as an Advocate on our behalf.

Kedesh (Sanctuary, sanctified), in Galilee: "Place of Discovery." A new nation needed a new government. God had told Moses how this new government should work. Way in the north, beyond Galilee, was a city up in the hills in the territory allotted to Naphtali. "Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns" was the description we read [Gen.49:21]. The name means "Free;" "He utters beautiful words." It is in such a place we learn to know our self, as Isaiah did when he saw the Lord, Isaiah 6:5. We also discover when we come into the family of God that before we were saved we were by nature without God, without Christ and without hope. Ephesians 2:12. By practice we were far off from Him, but now, by the blood of Christ we have been brought near into this place of safety in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:13.

Shechem (Shoulder), in Mount Ephraim: "Place of Rest." In the hill country of Ephraim west of the Jordan River near the center of the country was the city of Shechem. The second son of Joseph was placed ahead of his older brother. Joseph was a "fruitful vine near a spring whose branches run over a wall." He was like a wild colt, beautiful and free grazing on a terraced hill. This was a safe place where anyone coming could easily be seen. There is a rest for the people of God, but the first need we have is rest from sin and its consequences, Matthew 11:28. That is the rest of peace with God, not the rest a lazy person wants. There is also the rest from judgment when we know we are free in Christ and justified so that there, guilt of the past can be replaced with gratitude and thankfulness in the present, Romans 8:1. We have been rescued from the power of Satan and placed into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, Colossians 1:13.

Hebron (Communion), in the mountain of Judah: "Place of Fellowship." In the hill country of Judah another city sits high up where one who is fleeing for refuge can be safe until his trial is held. Judah is greatly blessed as the kingly tribe who will rule and through whom Messiah will come. The name Judah, means "Praise." The grace of God has brought us into a place where we can have fellowship with the Father, 1st John.1:3, with the Son, 1st John.1:3, and with one another as believers, Malachi.3:16. Our fellowship is based on our obedience to the Word of God. Its operation depends on the unity of believers and it is maintained by the Holy Spirit.

Bezer (Firmness, stronghold), in the wilderness of the plain: "Place of Strength." In the desert far to the east in the land of Reuben lies Bezer. All around is the flat plateau of Reuben giving visual sight to any in the city of one running to the city ahead of his pursuers. He could stay within its walls until a fair trial could be held and a public decision made. For us, Christ is the Hiding Place we have from everything that is arrayed against us, Isaiah 32:1. He reigns in righteousness. He rules with justice. He is the shelter from the wind and storm and is the rock in a weary land. Christ, the Rock, is our refuge. Ps.62:7. Christ is the Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, John 1:3. He has full knowledge of every situation and every need.

Ramoth (High place), in Gad: "Place of Safety." The men of Gad were known as a band of raiders, not easily intimidated by any who would try to attack. Any attackers would find the men of Gad would take seriously any who would try to take someone out of Ramoth who had come to that city of refuge without having his case heard and justly judged. We can be well encouraged that it is in the hand of the Lord we are hidden and kept there safely, Isaiah 49:2. Not only that, when we were lost in the wilderness it was on His shoulder we are brought by Him to the fold of safety, Luke 15:5. This safety is sure because it is with His arm we are held in this place of security where those who are avengers cannot claim us, Song of Solomon 2:6.

Golan (Joy), in Bashan (*Golan Heights*): "Place of Rejoicing." High above the Sea of Galilee to the east are the heights of Golan in the territory of Manasseh where one who accidentally killed another could flee to find safety. The Levites in charge of these cities were there to ensure the principles of justice and fairness were kept. The Subject of our rejoicing is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in who we have our confidence and in whom we rejoice, Philippians 3:3. In spite of the outward circumstances of our lives, our inner attitude should be one of rejoicing always, Philippians 4:4. If we have lost that joy, we need to again look at the events of our lives from a different perspective and we will find many reasons to continue rejoicing. The progress and growth in grace and faith in the life of a believer produces an abundance of rejoicing, Philippians 1:26.

The gates of the cities of refuge were always open. God Himself set apart those specific cities on His own principles of government so that anyone who entered there was safe. The claims of justice that satisfy God are the ones that count, not our claims. Our security is in Christ. His acceptance by the righteous God is our acceptance. In this way God can be "just and the justifier" of all who believe in Him. In our "city of refuge" we are not merely in a place of safety, but are changed into a new creation. Justice has been maintained; divine righteousness has been satisfied and the gates of mercy are wide open to us as God in great love allows us to be partakers of His grace. The action on our part that makes all of this possible is faith in God through His Word revealing to us His will. Faith made the man-slayer flee to the city of refuge, and faith makes us today flee to Christ.

#### **THE OPEN GATE**

Justice, government and laws are needed in all the societies of men  
Without any or all of these, chaos and mayhem would never end.  
So, who decides what laws are right for a culture to be put in place?  
If left to man's devices alone there would be no balance between right and grace.

To see a man running hard to a city today, would seem to be strange indeed.  
The avenger had his rights, as well as the slayer who committed the deed.  
In order to have a fair hearing the man-slayer was able to run  
To the nearest of six cities where the judges would hear what he had done.

By fleeing with all speed to the city, he confessed the act had been committed.  
Judges made decisions based on truth not pity; accidental or deliberate - justice fitted  
By the evidence and attitude displayed, so the act was determined an accident or crime  
In the city the slayer stayed in safety, until the matter concluded by the passing of time.

For us Christ is our city of refuge to which we flee from the wrath to come  
Justice by a righteous God is demanded because death has passed on every one  
In grace in our city of refuge, justice was done when for us Jesus died  
There is no reason to leave this fair city, here in Christ, we can safely abide.

"There is therefore now no condemnation," in this place I'm forever secure  
The avenger of souls cannot enter, the grace shown will forever endure  
Grace opened the gate wide to me, and in faith I entered inside  
Now grace maintains me each day, and all the grace I need is supplied.

Like the cities of refuge close by, the grace of God bids me to draw near  
The one who flees to this safe "city," will find all he needs is right here  
We are saved from "wrath to come;" we were saved when we called on Christ's name  
There is no other one who can save us, it is to our Lord Jesus each one came.

In this position in Christ we are safe, and will be eternally  
Here the grace we needed was extended, with the One who saved us we will ever be  
Confusion, chaos and revenge, cannot by the avenger come inside these walls  
The grace-door of the city is open, to whosoever on the Lord Jesus' name calls.

**"Father in heaven, I thank Thee for those Thou hast set in our assemblies who are able to pass a wise and impartial decision about matters that have the potential to divide Thy people. Grant to them a spirit of gracious fairness that will serve the people of God in a righteous manner. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Joshua 21**

#### **THE LORD GAVE**

After all other tribes had received their designated portions of the promised land, the Levites came forward to get the cities where they would live. The attitude of humility, lowliness and meekness was consistent with the role God gave them to fill. Those who serve God as His representatives among His people need these Christ-like characteristics as they serve Him by serving His people. When we have personally learned the value of God's grace, we have the responsibility to demonstrate that to those among who we live.

The cities the Levites were given included the cities of refuge, and the others were strategically located so that almost everyone in Israel was within a day's journey of those who represented God's interests. God was faithful in all His promises to Israel even though they were not totally faithful to Him. The more we experience of the promises of God, the more assurance we have in relation to the future. We don't know what the future holds, "but we know Who holds the future." God will bring to pass all His promises in His own time and way. There is no reason for us to ever doubt Him or His Word.

Levites had their work defined and cut out for them. They were to do what others were not allowed to do. The service of the sanctuary was their responsibility. The Levitical priesthood had their work explained. They had the custody of the law so every event that arose had to be judged by the law the Levites were responsible to know. Theirs was the responsibility to guard and set the example for the culture of the nation. Their instructions came from God and they were to pass them on as a power to the people to preserve them from all the evil influences around them. We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ," and it is our responsibility to in turn point out to others the value of all that means.

We had to first learn our own need of Christ before we learned what He is for us. There is the "prize of the high calling of God" that motivates us to be a distinct testimony among the nation even though we do not look any different. That distinction comes from knowing who we are before the Lord and that service to which we are called. We don't need to compare ourselves and what we have called to do, with that of others. Our inheritance is very plain. We have been called to serve the Lord, and what a great privilege that is! The Levites dwelt in the cities of refuge so they were free to give themselves to the Lord's service in close association with Him. It is up to us to apply ourselves to learn from God so that we can speak for God to the people of God as well as to all those around "who know not God."

Even among the Levites there were different roles to fill and different work to do. Each was important, though different, and each was needed to complete the work of God. In a similar way each one of us has our own work and reason for serving the Lord. There is no reason for any believer to covet that which the Lord has called others to do. "Coveting the best gifts" does not lead us to covet that which God has given another person, but to apply ourselves with love for God and men to that for which we have been chosen. We learn Christ through His Word. We learn ourselves through His Word. We learn how to comprehend, appreciate and use our gifts through His Word.

The Levites learned God's mind through the types and shadows given by the law. It is our great privilege to learn from God the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and teaches us all things and at all times. Levites knew they were separated to the Lord Himself and to the service to which He had designated them. We are separated to the Lord and find our occupation in life to be in Him alone. All other interests are subservient to His interests and really are counted as loss if they conflict in any way with His. The Lord knows what we desire more than all else. When we know who we are and where we belong, and are content to live there, God in His grace and love fills our hearts with Himself and fills our hands for His service. It is there we find rest for our souls amidst all the turmoil and uncertainty of life around us.

The real value of the Levites inheritance was their relationship with God, not the size of their cities and possessions. The value of our lives lies in the value of our relationship with the Lord, not the size of our congregations. Hebron was a city where priests lived and the land around was the inheritance of Caleb and his family. The promises of the Lord and all that we can claim for ourselves as possessions, are the things that are valuable in this life. Even though there were enemies around, the people of God had a God-given rest in their God-given land. God fulfilled all His good promises. What a blessing it is for us to have the wonderful God-given portion we enjoy as our spiritual inheritance. It no doubt seems small to those who measure things by the world's standard, but to us who believe, it is "exceeding abundant," far more than we deserve. Not only that, we have a God-given rest that those in the world know nothing about, and many of God's people have never claimed for themselves. How great and wonderful is our portion in our Lord Jesus Christ!

**Joshua 21:45.** *"There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."*

**ALL CAME TO PASS.**

God gave His word, and it came to pass,  
Not an enemy stood in the way of His promise.  
The Levites too, within each tribe had a place -  
Their cities and land around were theirs to possess.

When God calls His own through preaching the Gospel  
Those He saves and sets apart by His grace alone -  
He intends every one of them to spiritually prosper,  
And make His gathering center their spiritual home.

Among all the cities around, there He sets a lamp -  
Intending that lamp-stand to shine there for Him.

That group of His saints gathered "outside the camp,"  
Should be an influence for God in the place they are in.

There were homes for them to live in that "set apart" city,  
Where they could all live in safety and peace -  
Others around could run there from danger to flee -  
Fair judgment could be expected from those in that place.

Our "cities of refuge" today aren't much different,  
Those who dwell there are in the "house of our God."  
The "suburbs" around provide full and sufficient -  
To meet the needs of those who are called by the Lord.

Other people may need to run to us for safety -  
The enemy of souls is hard on their track.  
People should know they can dwell with us safely -  
And hear a fair verdict of what they've done or they lack.

Among all the "cities" of our land we seem small -  
But size isn't the measure as to whether God's here or not.  
Each person who lives here is one God has called -  
And placed with a few others in this sanctified spot.

**"I am sitting this morning, Father, in a place where saints have gathered for many years unto the Lord Jesus Christ and in His name alone. They were larger in number at the beginning than they are now, but there still is a testimony to this area of a few people who gather regularly to their Savior. Give them the courage and grace to continue. Let them see the worth of what they are doing. Give them a sense of the dignity of living in a "city of refuge" where there is no other such place for several hours distant. If and when someone "runs" to them, help them to be able to make fair and just judgments that will glorify God and lead to the blessing of the one who comes among them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Joshua 22**

### **EXPEDIENCY OR FAITH?**

The tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh, were faithful to the command of Moses for the soldiers to go with the other tribes across the Jordan River until they possessed the promised land. They were given permission to chose their own lands east of the Jordan. Forty thousand men, a little less than half, went and stayed through the whole conquest. They were faithful to the children of Israel and to the command of the Lord. Our flesh often wants what it has here and is satisfied with what it chooses for itself rather than pressing on in faith to be near to God. We have to be careful that what is expedient doesn't smooth over arguments to get what the flesh has as its objective.

Joshua commanded those warriors who followed through in the work of the Lord until the land belonged to Israel. Whenever we have a work to do for God, it is important that we do not stop before the job is done. We have spiritual responsibilities to accomplish it is true, but service for God may take us away from nearness to the Lord if we are not careful. Who we are, is much more important than the things we do. Our pilgrim character needs to be maintained.

When Joshua blessed those men and sent them home rich with their share of the bounty taken in battle, he gave them a strong exhortation to love the Lord and walk in the ways of the Lord. In order to do that they must keep His commandments, cleave to Him personally and serve Him whole-heartedly. Blessings are wonderful but we need to remember that they all have come to us from the Lord. We cannot claim everything we have because we deserve it. Our blessings are given to us by God and are to be shared with others who have needs as well and have served God by "staying by the stuff" while we press ahead with our work.

Those two and a half tribes received their inheritance in a premature request rather than by the division of land after the conquest was over. Sometimes to act prematurely can cause difficulties later that were never thought of when God gave us that for which we asked. It was not that they did wrong, but that they stopped short of what had been promised. Expediency has some future costs. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Desire begins within us and by degrees establishes itself openly. When warnings are given, they are explained away or are overlooked as a mere glitch that is not worth our consideration. To depart from Shiloh where the gathering center was at the tabernacle, may not have seemed too important. After all, Shiloh wasn't a perfect place either. But when we take our own chosen position, even though it is

allowed, that is the beginning of a departure in order to protect our own chosen inheritance and claim for ourselves the things we treasure.

The Lord did not cast aside those who had made their own choice. He provided cities of refuge, and Levites to deal with spiritual matters and remind them of who they were. But their real affections were on the east side of the river. In order to facilitate that interest, they built a great altar of stones. The problem started there because it was "a great altar to see to," not an altar to the Lord built by the Lord's direction. We may make a building or an "altar" that is huge and awe-inspiring, but such a memorial is a useless thing if the instruction to build it did not come from God and was not for God. Complacency and expediency were the motivation behind building the "great altar to see to." The future generations may ask, "*What have you got to do with the people of God anyway?*" but that doesn't change the fact that God expects His people to walk by faith, not by sight.

Why people do certain things may be because they have seen the real thing and want to make their own copy and accommodate it to suit themselves. Even though it was much larger than the memorial of twelve stones on the west side of Jordan, it was still a work of the flesh. The children on the east side could say to the children on the west side, "Our memorial is much bigger and far more impressive than your memorial." The children on the west could say, "The memorial on our side is because God told our fathers to put it here to remind us that right here was where God kept His promise and we crossed the river on dry land. What does your pile of stones mean?" So, the name "Ed" (witness) was put on it in hopes that the children would know the Lord is God. It is not our place to condemn what people do as much as to promote what the Lord has given us and done for us. That is recognized by faith, not sight.

Those on the east of Jordan erected an altar to witness to oneness with those on the west side. The other tribes jumped to false conclusions and presumed the altar was for worship and sacrifice, and showed division among God's people. The committee of men who came to find out, found their motive was pure and sincere and tragedy was avoided, with the result of closer ties of fellowship. We need to learn and remember that rumor and gossip is not acceptable among God's people. Those who imply wrong motives or put a wrong interpretation on an innocent action are actually being manipulated by the devil. He is the originator of division. If we have been unkind and resentful, we will shrivel spiritually. By God's grace, we can learn to live by grace and love those we may not be inclined to love. This will make us compatible.

The Lord in grace did not cast off His people even though there was evidence their affections were on the east side of the Jordan River rather than at Shiloh where the Lord chose to place His name. Believers who leave where God placed them at first, invariably lay blame on those who stay. The consequences of a change in order to endeavor to bring God into the land of sight rather than faith, doesn't make it happen. It very seldom happens that one returns to what they left even though they know it is right. Expediency is hard to give up when the cost of going against the tide of the opinion of others is a factor.

However, we learn from this incident that it is possible for us to find fault without first of all finding the reason for a thing to happen. There is a principle to follow when a potential conflict arises. That begins with seeking a peaceful solution by learning what the root cause is first. Avoid strife if possible and maintain unity if possible. We need to be sure to judge ourselves before passing judgment on others. When we focus on the Lord, not what seems to us to be wrong, a problem can usually be easily solved. Wise counsel, time needed to search a matter out, and true and honest reports, are the keys to settling things right that may divide the Lord's people.

Initial hostility needs to be checked before there is confrontation or accusations made. When we do things God's way as taught in Matthew 18, and is illustrated here for our learning, then we will recognize the need for unity to be preserved scripturally. If we act carefully and are willing to act responsibly before God, almost everything that divides can be appropriately dealt with. Let us keep our eyes and attention on the Lord Himself by faith, and not succumb to the temptation of expediency.

**Joshua 22:5.** "*But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, and to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and soul.*"

#### **POTENTIAL PROBLEMS.**

The sound of clashing swords and the shouts of fighting men has ceased  
The calls between men are not of fear and anger, but peaceful words  
Children and women are moving into new homes and daddy is home  
The sounds heard around the quiet fields are those of glad working.

The land is at rest.

The young, strong men are setting aside trophies and instruments of war  
Groups of men are moving out in different directions to their allotted places  
Even though they may never see each other again, they have a common bond  
God had told them to unite against the common enemy until victory is won.  
And the land is at rest.

Promises are made to give God His rightful place among them  
Blessings are given to those who kept their word to fight to the end  
Leadership is acknowledged still and authority is not questioned  
All seems well as the great army returns to a quiet and peaceful life.  
The land is at rest.

The Jordan is crossed and some have traveled many days to get to their homes  
It is a long way back to Shiloh and we live here, this is our land  
We need an altar here of our own, impressive, a great big one  
Not like the smaller one in front of the tabernacle.  
Trouble looms.

This one is not built by the pattern of God's choosing but by the choice of men  
And across the peaceful land bad news flows like the wind  
And men reach again for their swords and the weapons of war  
This time, to go against their own brothers, war is still in their blood  
Trouble is here.

Hasty conferences are called and men run to meet and make a statement  
While others form marching groups, one group makes a declaration  
It seems plausible but the words are smooth and placating  
The words sound right and reasonable - and peaceful.  
Trouble is averted - for now.

**“O God, preserve me from making hasty judgments against any of my brethren. I know what a thing looks like to me and in my eyes is wrong. But I do not know his motives. His thoughts and reasons may be perfectly just and right. Help to learn the lesson of finding out from one who looks at things differently than I do; why he does them and what is the motive behind it. Keep me from unrighteous judgments, I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

### **Joshua 23**

#### **LAST WORDS - UNCHANGING PRINCIPLES**

Twenty or twenty-five years after Israel had claimed the land of promise, they still hadn't carried out the word of the Lord relating to the previous inhabitants and their evil idolatrous practices. Joshua must have been able to see that and was concerned about the future of God's people. The dangers were subtle because the false contentment of complacency had already settled on the Israelites and they were content to share life with those who opposed God and did not care for His word. Appeasement has always ended in disaster ultimately. When early zeal for truth and righteousness fades, those who are enemies can be perceived as friends. An apathetic attitude towards the enemies of God quickly leads to compromising of our own integrity. The standards of life that we once lived by are lowered and we are in danger of going back to what God hates.

Caleb, Phinehas the high priest, those older ones in leadership who were involved in following the word of the Lord as He guided them into the land and victories over blatant and dark evil, were gathered as Joshua expressed his concerns. There may have been the younger, up-coming leaders there also, who were wanting to take over and make changes that would better adapt to the new generation who did not know warfare. They were wanting to accommodate to life as it was, not life as God intended. The standards of separation were being lowered by those who did not know or appreciate the wisdom and faithfulness of God. The Lord is faithful to all of His promises. The challenge to the leadership was to not forget it was the Lord who brought them there. It is the Lord to whom we belong. It is His interests we represent. He was faithful to us in the past and will be to us in the future if we are strong to do His will and love Him.

Leaders have a serious responsibility. Leaders need courage to stand against both liberalism and legalism. To lead God's people in holy living and maintain the biblical standards to which we are committed, calls for courage and personal commitment. Cleaving to the Lord is the only way this charge can be fulfilled. Those who cleave unto Him are close enough to hear what He has to say, understand what He means and feel

what He feels. Love for the Lord is needed. Our affection for Him as well as our value of Him will keep us in a spiritual condition in which we can speak for Him and guide others to Him.

Those who lead need to understand what Joshua said to those of his day regarding apostasy. We need to pass on what we know to others so they are able to warn against the dangers which are seeking to overtake the people of God. Mixed marriages, false forms of worship, lack of purity and holiness, turning back to what we left, are all signs of latent apostasy lurking near us. Prayerlessness, cold calculating Christianity, lack of concern for the lost and a materialistic outlook on life are all evidence that the danger of backsliding is near. The results of that kind of living are defeat in spiritual life, powerlessness over sin and attraction to worldly standards of living. Spiritual discomfort and tolerance of evil lead to the loss of our joy in the Lord. Soon we will not even seem any different from those who do not know and love the Lord. When the passion for the souls of people freezes; coldness in our heart comes in; prayerlessness paralyzes us – then comes defeat. Weakness, indifference will lead to defeat and dishonor of the name of the Lord.

Unjudged evil, and alliances formed with those who do not want God in their lives, will turn us away from power for living holy, righteous and godly lives in testimony to the Lord. Joshua warned the people of his day that if they left the ways and will of God to follow the ways and will of the world, God would leave them to fight the enemies - worldliness, superstition and idolatry on their own. To guard against the challenges latent apostasy brings, we must commit ourselves to be obedient to God's Word and apply its teaching to our daily lives. We need to have conscious communion with God and enjoy fellowship with Him to stand strong under pressures to conform to what is popular. It is our responsibility to separate from the accepted, sinful practices of the social world, business world and religious world and those who do not know and follow the Lord. Snares, traps, scourges and thorns from the world system, result in desperate discomfort to a true believer. Failure to press on to fulfill God's purposes, tolerance of the enemy and a willingness to allow the enemy to share our land will bring desperate discomfort. Sin must be deliberately driven out. Temptation cannot be pampered or encouraged. Compromise cannot be given a foothold lest it become a scourge. If allowed to continue, "Ye shall perish quickly."

Failure to be deeply and sincerely devoted to the Lord soon leads to an "anything goes if we have a Christian song or brief devotional word," mentality. Joshua was so right when he told those leaders to "take heed that ye love the Lord your God." When "the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts," we have the right perspective of ourselves and have something to pass on to others. The faithfulness of God should never be taken for granted if we choose to go our own way and ignore the unchanging principles of God.

Unchanging principles of faith are passed down from one generation to the next. Every age and generation is called upon to learn the principles of Christian living, which begin with *obedience*. Do we obey the Bible? Do we pray? Do we allow God's will and Word to convince and convict us until we obey? It means keeping clear of worldliness. It means to not play at Christianity and coddle sin. It means doing battle against Satan. It means being separated *to* God, not just *from* the world. The separated Christian does not give up what is wrong reluctantly, but gladly and with all his heart because he loves the Lord. True believers love Christ and are contented with Him. Love Christ and you will be bolder in witness. Love Christ and you will submit to His Word. Love Christ and you will not be inconsistent to Him.

**Joshua 23:14.** *"And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye shall know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."*

#### **PRINCIPLES TO FOLLOW.**

He stands there before them at one hundred and ten,  
The leaders, the priests, the aspiring young men -  
To speak final words and principles they must follow -  
Else the land gained will be lost and the victories hollow.

When passion for souls has cooled and coldness comes in;  
When prayerlessness paralyzes and we dishonor the name  
Of the Lord who went before with the hornet and power,  
Then the enemy will come and attack at our weakest hour.

Discomfort and defeat are followed quickly by disgrace.  
What once was our possession becomes another's place.  
God has never, and will never fail in one single thing -  
But we can quickly lose all He gave, when we fail Him.

The safeguard of obedience is one of the principles of faith.

It is often passed along from one generation to the next.  
A principle of Christian living is, am I willing to obey -  
Do I obey what I read? Am I convicted to pray?

Separation from sin and the worldliness around -  
Doesn't mean I leave here and go to some other ground;  
But it does mean I walk away from what I know is wrong,  
And though I am weak, separation to God makes me strong.

Devotion to Christ, love and contentment with Him -  
Serves to make me bolder in witness, and aware of sin.  
Love to Christ will lead me to love His Word -  
That will make me consistently follow my Lord.

**“Make me aware Father, of anything in my life that tends in the slightest way to compromise and inconsistency. I know that would be very dishonoring to my Lord, and it could easily mislead other believers who I have influenced over the years. May I be willing at all times to heed the safeguards of obedience, separation and devotion. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **JOSHUA 24**

### **POWER FOR SERVICE**

The gathering of the children of God at Shechem was extremely significant because it was there between the two mountains the tribes "presented themselves before God," in the presence of God. It was there the old general reviewed the life of the nation for the benefit of the people who only had the faintest memories of where the journey of Israel began. It began when Abraham was called from the other side of the flood. Joshua would have known personally what it was like to have been in slavery in Egypt and delivered the night of the Passover. The Red Sea, Mount Sinai and the wilderness experiences before the crossing the Jordan River and the conquest of the land were all reviewed to remind the new generation of the covenant the Lord had made with His people. To fear the Lord, serve the Lord and have nothing to do with the gods of the land was his charge to the people. New leaders were needed to help the people of God make the right choices and respond in the right way to the Lord. Theirs was a solemn responsibility to fulfill.

Every revelation of truth that leads to a deeper Christian life, leads to a new and greater ability for service. Service can be drudgery if it is not founded on the Word of God and empowered by the Spirit of God. The book of Joshua unfolds the revelation of God to His people. Between v.2 and v.13, the divine personal pronouns occur 17 times; "I took... I gave...I sent...I brought you out... I destroyed... I delivered..." It was revealed to them they owed everything to the intervention and power of God. The same teaching is in Ephesians 2 for us in the Church. Our salvation is the working of God. He has an over-all plan for us. He is working in us by the Holy Spirit. His plan is to present us perfect in position, perfect and mature in experience, and accepted in Christ Jesus.

Every revelation of truth leads to new and personal service for God based on the word of God and will be a privilege and delight to us. In our experience in life we must make a choice for service, v.15. We may respond to His claim with enthusiasm but find ourselves powerless to perform what we promised. We cannot fulfill the works of God in the flesh. We need more than union with God; we need communion with Him. We are in a position by virtue of what the Lord did on Calvary, to fulfill the service to which He calls us, only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian experience depends on revelation or else it is false. If revelation does not lead to experience, we become cold. We may serve but never succeed. There can be life without health; movement without progress. Don't be satisfied with less than vital experiences with God. When we chose to be controlled by the Spirit of God, we will have to reaffirm our commitment quite often in our service.

Joshua's public stand for the Lord displayed his spiritual leadership. "Incline your hearts unto the Lord God..." [v.23]. To serve, we must surrender. To overcome, we must obey. Our character must be a reflection of His purity. Our approach to God must be in holiness. Our victory can be only by His power. To live an abundant life, everything must be done out of love for Christ. Our faith must be brightened by our view of Calvary. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." When our service for God is based on the Word of God, it is a privilege and delight to us. Truth when it grips our hearts is an overflow of our hearts. We think of what the Lord has done for us and our position in Christ, we are motivated to serve because of His goodness. We have experienced His kindness by grace and want to glorify Him. If we serve, we must surrender to the Lordship of Christ. To overcome we must obey Him and translate faith into experience.

Jacob had come to this old oak or monument of Shechem and buried his household goods. In the same place, Israel had set up the law (Shechem lies between the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim). Here they come again at the close of Joshua's life, and promise obedience to the Lord. We all have our times too, when our hearts are stirred and we have honestly longed to be all we can for God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Joshua wrote everything down there so there could be no mistake as to God's ways and words. But he also put the stone there beside the tabernacle as a witness to them every time they would come to offer at the altar, that they had heard the word of the Lord. It is not a light thing to have heard and known, God's word and will. We can spend so much time on the means that we forget the end – the main purpose of our lives. That is to glorify God. It is possible to put so much focus into a building or a method that we forget why we are here.

In the covenant we have entered, the Lord not only promises to forgive us and love us, but enables us to serve Him here on earth. We are able naturally to worship Him properly, but the work of our High Priest gives us acceptance. We must take every precaution lest anything is allowed in our lives that would ever compromise the victorious life God intends us to live. Joseph and Joshua were great deliverers in their lives. Eleazar was a deliverer in his death because at his death, those who had fled to the cities of refuge were set free [20:6].

The leader Joshua died but not before laying before the people the fundamentals of what it means to have faith in God. We are to fear and serve the Lord alone [v.14]. This is based on choice, the choice to obey Him instead of following other gods. Our Captain has gone into heaven and will soon call us to be with Him. The shepherd, Joseph had his bones laid with his ancestors. The one who had provided for his own in Egypt is now laid with the bones of his father Jacob after all those years. The covenant made requires us to renounce all the principles and practices of the culture around us that are hostile to God's plan. The priest, Eleazar also died. These three men were all buried in the allotment given to Joseph's sons. We have a Great High Priest by whom we have continual access into God's presence.

What is acceptable to God in family life? Is it enough to love a person? Is it enough for that person to be a Christian? There comes a time when we must decide whether we are willing to obey the Lord who has proven Himself trustworthy or obey the local gods. Man-made idols or ideas of life and love are very easy to slip into and accommodate to. Really, this means that we set up ourselves as the leader of our life rather than the Lord. When we go about our lives in our own way, we are choosing who or what will control us. Will it be God, our own limited personality or another imperfect substitute? The choice is yours. Once we make the choice to be directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit, we have to daily reaffirm that choice. We have to go further – we must make sure there is nothing that even implies that it is claiming a place of leading in my life. Prejudice, greed, wrong priorities, jealousy all are things that can challenge my family's future.

When Joshua made a definite public stand for the Lord, he displayed his spiritual leadership. Others now had a living example of living by that decision. The way we live shows others the strength of our commitment to serving God. Talk is cheap. It is easy to say we will follow God but it is much more important to live it. The nation followed God through Joshua's lifetime. That is a great tribute to his faith in God and his powerful leadership.

**Joshua 24:15.** *“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

#### **POWER FOR SERVICE**

It is not by the power of men, nor by the skill we possess -  
That we can defeat a strong enemy or overcome mighty stress.  
It is not by the power of positive thinking we can ever hope to gain -  
Power comes when we are willing to serve God in Jesus' name.

It is God who works in us to fulfill His grand designs,  
It is not some keen organization, compromise or slick plans.  
The Holy Spirit works in us working with God's intervention -  
That produces the results revealed by divine revelation.

I cannot fulfill my calling by the efforts of my flesh,  
That can only be done when the Spirit does me possess.  
Communion with God will let me experience His leading -  
Then there is power in service as I my Lord am heeding.

To serve I must surrender giving to God full control -

Knowing He empowers me, spirit body and my soul.  
He is the One I choose to serve and then the work is His,  
And I am able to enjoy more fully, the victories He gives.

**“I wonder, O God my Father, what was in Joshua’s mind when he looked at all those people before him. Did he sense a movement of compromise already? Even if he did, his statement of strong faith and commitment to Thee must have brought about some change in them according to their response. If there is anything, I can do to challenge the people of God to steadfast, biblical service for Thee and Thy glory alone, please lay it on me that I might be able to help my brothers and sisters lest they fail to be what they could be. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**