

Joshua Devotionals

Paul J Bucknell - Biblical Foundations for Freedom

LAND ALLOTMENTS

(Joshua 13-21)

Click charts to enlarge Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

JOSHUA RESOURCES

Joshua Commentary, Sermon, Illustration, Devotional

JOSHUA			
A BOOK ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE and REST			
HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS			
CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND		DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND	CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE
ACTION		ALLOCATION	APPEAL
Josh 1:1-5:15	Josh 6:1-12:24	Joshua 13:1-21:45	Josh 22:1-24:33
WARLORDS IN CANAAN		LANDLORDS IN CANAAN	
ENTERING CANAAN	CONQUERING CANAAN	DIVIDING CANAAN	
SECURING THE LAND		SETTLING THE LAND	
Preparation	Conquest	Possession	Consecration
ca. 1 Month	ca 7 Years	ca. 18 Years	

[See also more detailed Chart by Charles R Swindoll](#)

Key Verses:

Joshua 1:8+, Joshua 11:23+ and some favor Joshua 1:5+

Key Words (NAS95):

Land (84x)

Possess/possession (27x in 21v - Josh 1:6, 11, 15; 8:7; 12:1, 6f; 13:1; 17:12; 18:3; 19:47; 21:12, 41, 43; 22:4, 7, 9, 19; 23:5; 24:4, 8) Law (Josh 1:7f; 8:31f, 34; 22:5; 23:6; 24:26)

Servant(s) (26x in 23v - Jos. 1:1; Jos. 1:2; Jos. 1:7; Jos. 1:13; Jos. 1:15; Jos. 5:14; Jos. 8:31; Jos. 8:33; Jos. 9:8; Jos. 9:9; Jos. 9:11; Jos. 9:24; Jos. 10:6; Jos. 11:12; Jos. 11:15; Jos. 12:6; Jos. 13:8; Jos. 14:7; Jos. 18:7; Jos. 22:2; Jos. 22:4; Jos. 22:5; Jos. 24:29;

Christ in Joshua (see also notes below) - Christ is the believer's victorious leader, even as Joshua whose name means "Yahweh is salvation" was for Israel. Christ is also shown in [Rahab's](#) scarlet cord ([click here](#)), which pictures the believer's eternal safety from destruction through the blood of Christ

ELATED RESOURCES:

- Joshua Commentaries
- Joshua Devotionals II - from F B Meyer, Moody Bible Institute
- Joshua Sermons by C H Spurgeon
- Joshua Sermons by Alexander Maclaren

Joshua Devotionals Back to the Bible

Joshua 1:1-9

Theodore Epp

Workmen Die, but God Lives

The first statement made in Joshua 1:2 is, "Moses my servant is dead." Moses was dead but not God.

The work of God is in no way hindered by the death of His servants, no matter how eminent they may be. The workman may be removed, but the work goes forward as ordained by God. This is God's doing.

I think of a remarkable organization that God has raised up in this century, starting it through one man. There came a day when God called that man home, and many people wondered if the organization would continue.

I can say to the glory of God that it is not only going on, but it is larger than it ever was.

When we recognize that the spiritual life is God's doing, we will begin to grow. Until we do, we will not grow.

God can change servants in order to show that He may use whatever instrument He pleases. He is not tied down by, or to, any certain individual.

God is sovereign and can terminate the ministry of any of His servants when He pleases. He may change His principle of working any time He desires. A Moses can die, but God is eternal. He never dies.

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:2 - [Spurgeon note](#)).

Joshua 1:5

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Never Forsaken by

Joshua 1:5- "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you."

Never Forsaken - In 1970 an Arizona lawyer named Russel T. Tansie filed a \$100,000 damage suit against God. The suit was filed on behalf of Mr. Tansie's secretary, Betty Penrose, who accused God of negligence in His power over the weather when He allowed a lightning bolt to strike her home. The woman won the case when the Defendant failed to appear in court. I wonder if she ever collected?

When trials come or disaster strikes, it's easy to feel as if God is being negligent. When something we can't explain happens, we believe God has let us down. But the Bible makes it very clear that this is not true. God told Joshua that He would not leave nor forsake him. Actually, in the Hebrew language, the negative comes first and makes the thought even stronger: "not will I leave you" and "not will I forsake you." The order of these words emphasizes the fact that, no matter how difficult Joshua's circumstances might

become, God would not leave and He would not forsake. He was as committed to Joshua as He had been to Moses. Could you use that same kind of commitment from God today? You have it. Read Hebrews 13:5 (note).

God's presence doesn't mean that things will always go smoothly. Christians don't walk around with protective plastic bubbles surrounding them. We experience cancer; we endure sorrow and heartache; we fail in business. God's promise, however, is that He will continue to walk with us and be faithful to us even in our sorrows or failures. His company will bring you comfort that will exceed your understanding (see note Philippians 4:7).

Be assured that as God was with Moses and Joshua, He is with you as well. Jesus promised, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Whatever difficulties you face, you will not have to face them alone. He will never, no never, fail you nor forsake you. That's His promise to you.

Only God can say never--and really mean it.

Joshua 1:8

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

The Key to Good Success

Joshua 1:8 - This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

The Key to Good Success - My local newspaper reported that a man and woman who tried to hop a Union Pacific train from North Platte, Nebraska, to Omaha were being held in Dawson County jail on trespass charges. But the couple wouldn't have gotten to Omaha even if they hadn't been apprehended; the train was headed to Kansas City.

Many people who think they're on the train headed for success are really going in the opposite direction. History is awash with examples of men and women who found a form of success, but lived to regret it. It was not what the Bible calls "good" success. Lord Byron, who achieved fame both as a poet and a libertine, wrote at the age of 35:

My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.

God's success is far different; it's always headed in the right direction. Joshua was assured that if he lived consistent with what was written in God's Word, he would achieve success--but not just any success. God's promise to Joshua, as well as to you and me, is that if we live by all that is written in the Bible, we will achieve "good" success.

The key to good success is obedience to God's Word. If you conform your life to God's will, as it is revealed in His Word, you'll experience the kind of success that will be a blessing rather than a burden.

Only a good God can give good success

Joshua 1:9

Step Into The River Is Wide

Tony Beckett and Woodrow Kroll

Joshua 1-3, Mark 16

Knowing and doing are two different things. One can know what to do and fail to do it because of fear. At times, obedience is incomplete due to fear.

The Israelites were concluding 40 years in the wilderness due to fear. What they saw as impossible kept them from doing what God had wanted. Now the nation was once again on the brink of entering the land.

A new leader stood before them. His frequent challenge was, "Be strong and courageous." That phrase is repeated four times in chapter 1 (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9 and 18) and expressed in slightly different terms in other verses.

It was time to move out. They knew what they were to do and now they were to do it! Notice what happened next. The spies brought back an encouraging report and the people prepared to move out. Their first steps, though, were into a flooded river--where their sandals were to meet the mud, so to speak.

"Be strong and courageous" was put to the test when they stepped into that dangerous river. But they obeyed and God blessed (Joshua 3:15-16).

There will be times in our life of obedience that our courage will be tested. Be ready to step into the river. God is faithful even when the river is wide.

"Today and every day, Lord, give me the courage to obey. I need the strength You give."

Joshua 1:9

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Strong and Courageous

Joshua 1:9 - Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Strong and Courageous - A child had to walk each evening past a dark, spooky house. Some adult friends tried to give him courage. One handed him a good-luck charm to ward off the ghosts. Another installed a light at a particularly dark corner near the house. A third took a more spiritual approach, saying, "It's sinful to be afraid. Trust God and be brave!" It was good advice, but not much help. Then one friend said with compassion, "I know what it is to be afraid. I'll walk with you past the house." Instantly the child's fears were gone.

This was what God did for Joshua. Joshua faced the fearful task of leading a group of nomads against the trained armies of established kingdoms. That was enough to make even the bravest man tremble. But God did more than give Joshua a battle plan or a pep talk; He reassured him, saying, "I will be with you wherever you go."

God does not promise He will not lead you into fearful situations. He may call you to serve Him in a land far from your friends and family. For most of us this challenge could be frightening. Or God may ask you to stand against the tide of popular opinion on your school board or at a city council meeting. And again your knees may knock and your voice tremble. But just like Joshua, you can do it because God also has given you the solution for your fears: He has given you Himself.

In Christ you have strength for every weakness and the courage for every fear. The psalmist said, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [literally, the valley of dark shadows], I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4 - [Spurgeon note](#)). Are you facing a formidable task? Trust God's presence to dispel your fears and give you renewed strength and courage.

Courage is spelled C-H-R-I-S-T.

Joshua 1:10-18

Theodore Epp

Questionable Separation

Joshua 1:10-18 - A rather sad note enters in with regard to some of the tribes of Israel. They did not all have the same degree of separation from the evil around them or the same degree of surrender to God.

The background for this lies in the fact that while Moses was still leader, the Israelites conquered some of the kings on the east side of Jordan and took possession of their lands.

It was good land with strong, walled cities and a countryside ideal for the raising of cattle. Two and a half of the tribes, Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh, asked to stay on that side of the Jordan.

It must be said on behalf of these two and a half tribes that their warriors were willing to help the other tribes take the land across the river and possess it.

But the Reubenites and Gadites wanted to return to the other side of Jordan where things were more appealing to the eye and where there was ease, comfort, plenty and riches as the world would look at it.

They tasted of the blessings of the Promised Land and helped the others to secure it, but they themselves longed for the world--its pleasures and indulgences--and were eventually trapped and ensnared by it.

This is always the danger of those who would live on the border and not get into the land.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (see note Hebrews 12:1).

Joshua 2:1-14

Theodore Epp

A Pagan Testifies

Joshua 2:1-14 - When the King of Jericho commanded Rahab to give up the two men she hid in her house, she lied to him. She said they went out at dark and she did not know which direction they took.

Rahab's lie cannot be condoned. Such deceit cannot be justified as far as Christians are concerned. We must remember, however, that she was a pagan woman whose heart and mind were just being opened to spiritual things.

In spite of the fact that she lied, God used her to help preserve His servants. God used an enemy of His people to shelter two of them. This is in line with Proverbs 16:7, which says, "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

Something of what was going on in Rahab's mind is disclosed in her conversation with the two men after she brought them out from their hiding place. What a testimony this was, coming from the person who was not saved in the way we use that terminology!

For 40 years the Canaanites had been in fear of the Israelites. This must have been a revelation to these men of the terror that had laid hold of the whole population of Canaan, leaders and people alike. They knew that they could not stand against Israel's God.

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1).

Joshua 2:15-24

Theodore Epp

Faith in Action

It is significant that it was a scarlet cord, or rope, that Rahab was to display in her window. This was symbolic of the blood of Christ, which, according to 1 John 1:7, cleanses us from all sin.

In Hebrews 9:22 (note) we are told that "almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

The protection that came to Rahab's household reminds us also of the incident of the Passover in Egypt. God instructed His people to sprinkle blood on the doorposts of their houses.

He assured them that when the death angel came to slay the firstborn in Egypt, the houses protected by the blood would not be entered. They would be spared.

The scarlet cord in Rahab's window protected her household just as the blood on the doorposts protected the Israelites in Egypt.

The New Testament makes special mention of Rahab with regard to this. James wrote: "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (James 2:25).

Rahab had a faith that worked. She aided the spies in their escape from Jericho and hung a scarlet cord from her window. This was faith in action.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (see note Hebrews 11:1).

Joshua 3

Joshua 3:1

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Early in the Morning

Joshua 3:1 - Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over.

Early in the Morning - During the American Revolution, it is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops at Trenton,

New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack. It was too late. His procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed, and the rest of the regiment was captured.

Unlike Colonel Rahl, Joshua was one commander who didn't hesitate to take action. The job ahead was a major one: lead the people of Israel across the flooded Jordan and into Canaan. Roaring downward toward the Dead Sea, the current of the Jordan is very swift at Jericho. In addition, the melting snows in the Lebanon mountains caused the river to overflow at this season of the year. The task must have been intimidating. You could understand if Joshua chose to stall as long as possible. But instead of procrastinating, he "rose early in the morning" and began to rally the people for the trip ahead of them.

When faced with tasks that are frightening or disagreeable, many people choose to put them off as long as possible. They find excuses to avoid unpleasant situations or make difficult decisions. But what a mistake that is. Often it only makes matters worse.

If you are faced with a challenging situation, don't procrastinate. Trust in God's strength and wisdom. Claim His promises of presence and protection. Then, get up "early in the morning" and go to it. At the end of the day, you'll be glad you did.

A job never started is a job never finished

Joshua 3:1-8

Theodore Epp

Preparing to Move Out

Joshua 3:1-8 - There is a time for action, and there is also a time for waiting. There are times when we get in too big a hurry and are too impatient to wait on the Lord's time. On the other hand, there are some who lag behind and are not ready to move forward when they should.

We need to remember that God is never too late. If we really want to do His will, He will always do His part on time.

So there was a three-day delay when the people reached the Jordan River. This gave them the opportunity to become quiet before God and made it possible for Him to give them final instructions. It was when they were ready to hear that the orders were given.

The same is true in our spiritual experiences. We must make a decision and then act upon that decision. After we have acted on our decision, it may be that God will have us wait for a while.

This may sound like a paradox, but it is not. We need to learn to be calm before the Lord and await His time and timing for the events in our lives.

The reason for Israel's delay at the Jordan, and often the reason for a delay after God has made plain to us that we are to move ahead, is in order to see if we are in earnest. When this is evident, then further instructions are given us.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19,20)

Joshua 3:7

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Exalted by God

Joshua 3:7 - And the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to magnify you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you."

Exalted by God - How quickly man-made greatness fades! Before he attacked Russia, Napoleon Bonaparte seemed to have the world at his feet. But the Russian invasion turned into a disaster and Napoleon, fearing his position at home was in danger, left the French army and hurried back to France almost unaccompanied. Arriving at a river crossing, Napoleon inquired of the ferryman whether many deserters had come that way. Not recognizing the famous leader, the man responded, "No, you are the first."

God does not deal in such fleeting fame. What He offered to Joshua was something far better than anything man could give. As Joshua responded in obedience to God's Word, the Lord assured him that He would exalt him. Just as God had brought honor to Moses, so would He bring honor and respect to Joshua. This would not be a human grab for glory, but a gracious gift from God.

God offers the same to every Christian. As we make Christ the center of our lives and His Word the focal point of all that we say or do, the Lord will bring to us a glory that will outlast any honor that man could bestow. While we may not always be recognized by the movers and shakers of this world, the Scriptures assure us that we will be revealed in all our glory when Christ returns (see note 1 Peter 1:7).

Don't worry if those around you fail to praise you. Seek instead for the honor that comes from the Lord. That glory will last forever.

Eternal greatness can come only from an eternal God.

Joshua 3:9-17

Theodore Epp

A Step of Faith

Joshua 3:9-17 - It is a never-to-be-forgotten experience when we hear a promise of God and step out on it in faith and then see God doing things on our behalf. The priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan River saw God work.

It would not have been enough for them to have stood close to the edge of the water and to have believed in the great ability of God to stop the flow several miles upstream and pile up the waters as though there was a great dam there.

If we were asked, "Is God able to do such a thing?" we undoubtedly would answer yes. But if each of us had to answer the question "Will God do this for me?" what would our answer be?

Every Christian is as precious in God's sight as the people of Israel were precious in His sight. What He promised them He did for them, and what He has promised you and me He will do for us. If we step out in faith, God will work on our behalf.

The Israelites did not make the mistake at the edge of Jordan of merely reckoning on God's ability to do what He promised. They did not stand to see what God would do.

When they received their marching orders to go into the river and the priests led with the Ark, then the waters parted. Those priests got their feet wet. That is the only way faith operates.

"Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5).

Joshua 3:13

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Wet Feet

Joshua 3:13 - "And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap."

Wet Feet

Years ago visitors at one of the national mints were told by a guide that if they first dipped their hands in water, a ladle of molten metal could be poured over their outstretched palms without burning them. A husband and wife were part of this group. "Perhaps you would like to try it," the guide said to the husband. The husband drew back sharply, "No thanks," he said. "I'll take your word for it." The mint employee turned to the wife. "Would you like to try it?" She replied, "Certainly." She pulled up the sleeve of her blouse and thrust her hand into a bucket of water. Calmly she held her hand out while the metal was poured over it. It's obvious that the husband believed at one level, but he wasn't willing to put his belief to the test. The wife believed on a completely different level. She was willing to take a risk.

Joshua and his people also were faced with a risk. They needed to cross the dangerous, flood-swollen Jordan. God had previously opened the Red Sea when the people had to cross it, but this time the priests had to step into the water first and trust the Lord to open the way as they went. They had to get their feet wet and trust that God would honor their faith.

Many Christians dislike taking risks. They want the way opened before they move out for God. Often He graciously honors their desire. But we must remember that a risk is only a risk if God doesn't go with you. We need to step out and trust that God will confirm our faith at the appropriate time.

If your way seems blocked today, step forward by faith. Be willing to get your feet wet and then wait for God to respond.

God honors wet feet, not cold feet.

Joshua 4:1-11

Theodore Epp

Memorials of Faith

Joshua 4:1-11 - Gilgal was not only established as a home base for Israel during the conquest of the land; it also became a place of remembrance. Joshua was instructed to establish a memorial at Gilgal.

Later on in the chapter we read of the setting up of another memorial, this time in the river itself. These two memorials made of stones were to be reminders to Israel of their safe passage through the Jordan River.

From the standpoint of the types involved, these two memorials remind us of the two aspects of our identification with Christ.

First of all, the stones in the Jordan speak of the Israelites' having died to the past. Whenever an Israelite came into that area, he would see the stones and would be reminded that it was there Israel passed through the place of death as it were.

The second set of stones was set up at Gilgal, the place of Israel's first night's lodging. They speak of new life out of death.

These stones were taken out of the river as the Israelites marched through, then brought with them to the camping site. They therefore speak of Israel's new life on the other side of Jordan--a resurrection life.

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (see note Romans 6:4).

Joshua 4:12-24

Theodore Epp

A Place of Spiritual Resurrection

Gilgal marks the place of spiritual resurrection.

Christ not only died, but He was buried and rose again and then ascended to the right hand of the Father.

Very little is said in many Christian circles these days concerning the resurrection life, and practically nothing at all is said about the life of ascension. But we find in the Bible that these are spoken of very clearly.

We read in Joshua 4:19,20 that the people came up out of Jordan and camped in Gilgal, and the 12 stones that they took out of the river were piled together in Gilgal by Joshua.

The Jordan River speaks of the place of death and Gilgal the place of life. We repeat this because we need to remember it. The corresponding New Testament truth is found in Ephesians 2:5; 2:6 (notes) and is very important for our learning and growth.

Even when we were dead in sins, God quickened us together in Christ and raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.

This is our ascension, not for the future but for the present. There is a time in the future when He will come and resurrect these bodies of our humiliation and give us resurrection bodies

But even now in our spiritual life we have already been raised together with Him and seated with Him in the heavenlies. In our position before God we are not only delivered from the self and sin life, but we are identified with Christ in His new life.

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (see note Colossians 3:3).

Joshua 5:1-15

Evidence of Separation

Theodore Epp

As far as Israel was concerned, there was no inheritance possible to them until they were circumcised. This was clearly stated in Genesis 17 where the covenant concerning the land was given. So now, as the nation stood at the edge of Canaan, it was necessary that they follow through on the sign of separation, which for them was circumcision. This was the sign God made with

Abraham, and it was to be continued by his posterity.

The people renewed their separation through circumcision and also renewed their relationship by celebrating the Passover. Egypt with its bondage was behind them; the desert wanderings were over; Jordan, the place of decision, was crossed; and the nation was now ready to conquer Canaan. A new kind of food was necessary as Israel went against her enemies and took possession of the country.

Joshua soon discovered that he was face to face with the Captain of the Lord's hosts, the commander of the Lord's armies. Here was the Warrior and Leader, coming not to help but to take charge.

The Captain of the Lord's hosts came not only to direct the armies of Israel but also to fight for Israel and with Israel and through Israel. This is the same truth as is taught in Ephesians 6:10 (note) where we are told to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (see note Philippians 3:3).

Joshua 5:9

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Rolled Away

Joshua 5:9 - Then the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day.

Rolled Away - According to one source, Americans spend \$50 million a year on subliminal message tapes designed to help them do everything from improve their self-image to learn a foreign language. Unfortunately, the National Research Council has concluded that subliminal messages simply don't work. Despite all the hype to the contrary, these tapes don't deliver the life-transforming changes they promise.

But there is one source who always delivers on His promises--God. As the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land, they needed to renew their covenant with God. This relationship required that circumcision be performed as a sign of the covenant. Those Israelites who left Egypt had been circumcised, but those males born during the wilderness wandering had not (Joshua 5:4-5). It was now time for the younger generation to take their stand and have the "reproach of Egypt" rolled away.

Circumcision is no longer a sign of the covenant relationship with God. When Jesus died on the cross, the outward sign of circumcision was replaced with the inner presence of the Holy Spirit. He is the fulfillment of the promise in Ezekiel: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). When the Holy Spirit comes in, the old life is rolled away and we become "a new creation" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

This experience can be yours as well. If you are still walking in your old life, why not receive Christ today and let Him roll your sins away? The reproach of the past can be replaced with a hope for the future.

Christ doesn't improve you; He transforms you

Joshua 5:13-15

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

The 'What Man'

Joshua 5:13-15 - And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

The "What Man" - While watching his father tune up the family car, a five-year-old boy announced, "I know what I want to be when I grow up. I want to be a ?what man!" His puzzled father asked him to explain, so the little boy elaborated, "A ?what man' has a place where people bring their cars when there is something wrong with them, and he tells them what to do."

Israel had reached a point in their invasion plans where they also needed a "what man." Jericho was surrounded by fortified walls and defended by trained soldiers. Both were seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Yet as Joshua stood near the city, pondering what to do, the Commander of the Lord's army appeared to him. Most Bible scholars believe this to be a pre-incarnate appearance

of Christ. Joshua fell down before Him and said, "Tell me what you want me to do."

Often in life we need a "what man." Situations arise leaving us totally confused about what to do. That's when we need to turn to the Lord. Only the Lord God is capable of being our "what man." He has a plan for us that works out all the "whats" and "whys" of life. Through Jeremiah the prophet, He said, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).

Seek the Lord, read His Word daily, and find out what His will is for you. Avail yourself of His wisdom and you'll discover that He always knows what to do.

The "what" is never a secret to God.

Joshua 5:14

The Captain of the Host of the Lord

Alexander Maclaren

"The **Angel of the LORD** encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7 - [Spurgeon's note](#))

The vision of the divine presence ever takes the form which our circumstances most require. David's then need was safety and protection. Therefore he saw the Encamping Angel; even as to Joshua the leader He appeared as the Captain of the Lord's host; and as to Isaiah, in the year that the throne of Judah was emptied by the death of the earthly king, was given the vision of the Lord sitting on a throne, the King Eternal and Immortal.

So to us all His grace shapes its expression according to our wants, and the same gift is Protean in its power of transformation; being to one man wisdom, to another strength, to the solitary companionship, to the sorrowful consolation, to the glad sobering, to the thinker truth, to the worker practical force--to each his heart's desire, if the heart's delight be God. So manifold are the aspects of God's infinite sufficiency, that every soul, in every possible variety of circumstance, will find there just what will suit it. That armour fits every man who puts it on. That deep fountain is like some of those fabled springs which give forth whatsoever precious draught any thirsty lip asked. He takes the shape that our circumstances most need. Let us see that we, on our parts, use our circumstances to help us in anticipating the shapes in which God will draw near for our help.

Joshua 6:1-14

Theodore Epp

A Key to Future Victories

Joshua 6:1-14 - Israel was assured of victory over Jericho. It was the key city to the whole campaign in Canaan. Once that obstacle was removed, the armies of Israel could spread out in all directions. So it is no wonder that we find in this incident of history an abundance of spiritual lessons.

Israel herself could not retreat. They had no alternative except to go forward in victory or suffer death. The death the Israelites might have suffered would have been that of dying at the hands of their foes.

In the spiritual realm our danger is in succumbing to the Enemy because we do not apply the victory.

Humanly speaking, Jericho was so strongly fortified as to be almost incapable of being taken. It guarded all the passes to the interior of the land of Canaan. Consequently, so long as Jericho held out, the land was safe from invasion.

We find that the same experience meets us once we choose to go on in Christian warfare. Invisible forces rise up to try to stop us and will succeed unless we follow our Captain implicitly.

The enemy, Satan, will get us to consider our weaknesses, such as temperament or lack of ability or self-control, but these are the very things over which the Lord will give us victory.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (see note Philippians 4:13).

Joshua 6:3-5

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

It's a Mystery to Me

Joshua 6:3-5 - "You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six

days... But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. Then it shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat."

It's a Mystery to Me - In speaking of things beyond our understanding, the famous orator and statesman William Jennings Bryan declared, "I have observed the power of the watermelon seed. It has the power of drawing from the ground and through itself 200,000 times its weight. When you can tell me how it takes this material and out of it colors an outside surface beyond the imitation of art, and then forms inside of it a white rind and within that again a red heart, thickly inlaid with black seeds ... when you can explain to me the mystery of a watermelon, you can ask me to explain the mystery of God."

Joshua was faced with the mystery of God as well. Upon hearing the plan given by God, surely someone must have asked him, "How will marching around a wall, blowing trumpets and shouting knock down that wall?" Certainly it was beyond understanding. But the mysteries of God usually are.

Divine mysteries abound. We don't understand how a child could be conceived without a father, but it happened (Luke 1:34). We can't comprehend how an infinite God could be housed in a finite human body, but He was (see note Colossians 1:15). It's beyond our comprehension that one man's death could pay for the sins of the world, but it did (see note Romans 5:18). We don't understand, but that's okay. God's mysteries are not for us to explain; they are for us to accept by faith and act upon.

If you're struggling to understand a mystery of God, don't trouble yourself. The real issue is not whether you understand; it's whether you are willing to obey.

Faith obeys when explanations are lacking.

Joshua 6:12

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

God's "Haves" and "Wills"

Joshua 6:12 And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

As they had miraculously left the land of Egypt, Israel had now entered the land of Canaan by a similar miracle. All the people were safely across the swift waters of the Jordan. The army of Israel encamped at Gilgal. Having settled in the land, Joshua and the people were now ready for their first great test—the capture of the outpost of Jericho.

Since Jericho was the most secure stronghold in a string of fortifications defending the eastern front of Canaan, there were many anxious Israelite hearts the night before the conquest began. Joshua himself was pacing the ground at the edge of the Israeli encampment. While meditating on how to attack Jericho, a man appeared to Joshua with a sword drawn in his hand. Intrepidly Joshua asked, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" (Joshua 5:13) The powerful figure identified himself as the Captain of the host of the Lord. This title, so often afterward applied to the Son of God, revealed to Joshua that this was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Joshua must have known immediately the identity of this warrior for he fell on his face to the earth and worshiped Him.

Joshua 6:2 records, "And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor." Although it was the night before the once-a-day treks around the city of Jericho, the Lord's promise to Joshua was, "I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof." Their lines of battle had not yet been drawn. The fighting had not yet begun. Yet the victory was certain. Even before the event occurred, God said "I have done it."

How can this be? How can God say the battle is won before it is begun? The answer is that God is above time. He has no futures nor pasts, only an eternal present. He always deals in what is for Him the "now." Frequently God uses the words "I will" and "I have" interchangeably.

Consider the similar experience of Abraham, recorded in Genesis 17. Abram was ninety-nine years old when the Lord God appeared to him and, as Joshua did, he fell on his face before the Lord. The Almighty God was about to make a covenant with Abraham that he would become the father of many nations. To Abraham God said, "Neither shall thy name anymore be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee" (Genesis 17:5). To a childless ninety-nine-year-old man, whose wife was nearly that age, God said, "A father of many nations have I made thee."

In quoting that promise in Romans 4:17 (note), the Apostle Paul notes, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb" (see note Romans 4:19). It did not matter that Sarah was well beyond the age of childbearing. God said He had made Abraham the father of many nations and we can count God's "wills" as God's "haves."

As twentieth century believers, the promises of God to us which have yet to be fulfilled are in the eternity of God already fulfilled. Thus the Lord Jesus promised, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again" (John 14:2-3). Although this is an event in history future, nevertheless, it is a promise as certain as if it had already been fulfilled. God calls things that are not yet as if they already are.

Hence, even though the battle plan was strange to Joshua, the defeat of the enemy was sure. Trusting the God of completed promises, "Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD" (Joshua 6:12) and the children of Israel proceeded to the conquest of Jericho. Another great victory was won for the Lord God whose "haves" and "wills" are interchangeable.

MORNING HYMN

Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.

[\(Play Be Still My Soul\)](#)

Joshua 6:15-27

Theodore Epp

A Shout of Faith

According to Hebrews 11:30 (note), the walls of Jericho fell down by faith. Some people want to attribute the collapse of the walls to an earthquake.

It makes no difference to us what means God used. Whatever He did was timed so that after Israel had passed around the city the 13th time, and when the trumpets blew and the shout was made, then the walls fell. It took place just when God said it would.

God will speak again, and this time to the whole world. Just as the shout of the Israelites preceded the judgment on Jericho, so the Lord Jesus will come for His saints, descending from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first (see note 1Thessalonians 4:16).

Then will follow the Great Tribulation, the time of awful judgment for the earth. Hebrews 12:26(note) prophesies of this when it says of God, "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven."

Peter described it in 2 Peter 3 in these words: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (see note 2 Peter 3:10).

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52).

Joshua 6:15

Dr Woodrow Kroll

Perfect Promises

And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

Every few years the countries of the free world participate in national elections. The democratic system of government provides the opportunity for men and women representing their parties to campaign, make promises and pledges, and run for office on the basis of their platform and promises. Generally the winner is the person who promises the most and who, in the minds of the voters, can actually deliver on those campaign promises. Unfortunately history has taught us that most political promises are little more than campaign rhetoric and the voters have justifiable reason for concern about their validity. In contrast to this are the promises of God in which the believer may have absolute confidence. God has a perfect record of keeping His promises.

The story of Jericho's conquest is a fine example of the completed promises of God. Prior to their entrance into the promised land, Joshua sent two men across the Jordan to spy out the city of Jericho. These spies came to the place where information would freely flow among the men of the town. They entered the house of Rahab the harlot. Although the life of Rahab as a harlot was certainly

not condoned by the Israeli spies, nevertheless apparently the Lord God had been working in the heart of Rahab. When the king of Jericho attempted to track down the two spies, Rahab hid them on her roof among the sticks of flax. She confessed her faith in Jehovah God saying "The LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11). Because this woman aided His secret agents, God promised Rahab and her household salvation in the midst of the peril of her city.

God's battle plan for the defeat of Jericho was unconventional, to say the least. Joshua would command seven priests, bearing seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark of the Lord, to march around the city walls in silence for seven days, once each day until the seventh. On the seventh day they would march seven times around the wall. Then amid the blast of the seven jubilee trumpets and the war cry of the people of God, the destruction of the stronghold at Jericho would take place.

The children of Israel did as God commanded. "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day and compassed the city after the same manner seven times" Joshua (6:15). On the seventh circuit of the seventh day the people shouted and the walls of Jericho fell down flat. The army of Israel entered the city unhindered and utterly destroyed all that was in the city, with one notable exception--the household of Rahab. Because they obeyed the Lord explicitly, the people saw two great promises of the Lord performed on the same day. The city of Jericho, the strongest outpost of the Canaanite defenses, had been utterly destroyed as God had promised. Likewise Rahab and her household had been spared destruction, as God had promised.

But there is one final promise of God that can be seen in the conquest of Jericho. In verse 26 Joshua counseled the people, warning them, "Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." To show that God means business when He makes a promise, Joshua imprecated a solemn curse on anyone who would rebuild the now-destroyed Jericho. This curse was literally fulfilled in the fate of Heil, the Bethelite, who rebuilt Jericho in the reign of Ahab (about 925 B.C.). Heil's firstborn son, Abiram, died as he was laying the foundation for the rebuilding of Jericho. Also his youngest son, Segub, died while he was setting up the gates of the city (1 Kings 16:34). What God promises, God performs.

Whether the promise is for salvation, as in the case of Rahab, or for destruction, as in the case of Heil, the promises of God must never be taken lightly. Whatever God promises, God performs. You can count on it.

MORNING HYMN

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail
By the living word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.
([Play hymn Standing on the Promises](#))

Joshua 7:1-12

A Wrong Time to Pray

Theodore Epp

A failure to pray always makes us insensitive to sin. If we do not take time to pray, we will often not recognize sin for what it is. When we pray in the time of victory, we will not have to plead in the time of defeat.

When Joshua bowed his head in prayer following Israel's defeat, the Lord told him to get up and do something. This may sound like a contradiction to all the teaching we have had on prayer, but it is not.

God was simply telling Joshua that it was not the time to pray in the way he was praying. Israel had sinned; it was Joshua's responsibility as leader to erase this sin from Israel's life. The fault for this military reversal did not lie with God but with Israel.

How often we, like Joshua and the elders of Israel, are inclined to blame God when things go wrong. We sometimes say when reverses come that God has forsaken us.

Some people harden their hearts against God and blame Him that things are not going as they thought they should go. Yet had these individuals gone to God in the first place, they would have been directed in the proper way.

God knows from the very beginning what He is doing and why He is doing it. He knows all the underlying causes that are related to all the incidents in our lives. There is nothing hidden from Him.

"He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart" (2 Chr 25:2).

Joshua 7:3-5

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Let the Victory Beware

Joshua 7:3-5 - And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few." So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

Let the Victor Beware - On November 16, 1776, Fort Washington fell to the advancing British troops and General Washington was forced to retreat. Secure in his victory, General Howe chose not to pursue the Continental army, but ordered his men into winter quarters instead. On Christmas night, Washington ferried a portion of his troops back across the Delaware and mounted a surprise attack. The British were caught off guard and more than a thousand Hessian soldiers were taken prisoner. On the heels of victory, the British experienced a stinging defeat.

Joshua had the same experience. After an overwhelming victory at Jericho, his soldiers were routed by the defenders of a pile of rubble (Ai literally means "ruin"). While the defeat was brought about by sin in the camp (Josh 7:10-13), the attitude of those in leadership was one of arrogance and conceit. Their overconfidence set them up for a humiliating defeat.

Someone has said that the most vulnerable moment for a Christian is the moment following a spiritual victory. We are often basking in the glow of our accomplishments. Our guard is down. And Satan knows that this is a prime time to attack.

If you are experiencing a time of spiritual success, give God the glory. At the same time, be on guard. Continue with your spiritual disciplines and maintain an attitude of watchfulness. As the Scriptures warn, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

The more "puffed up" you are, the better target you make.

Joshua 7:11-12

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

It Only Hurts Me

Joshua 7:11-12 - "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you."

It Only Hurts Me - We never sin alone. A study of 8,415 adults revealed that those exposed to secondhand smoke experienced a 10 percent increase in the thickening of their carotid arteries, which supply blood to the brain. Thickening of the carotid arteries is a major cause of strokes. Other statistics indicate that drug and alcohol abuse is costing businesses more than \$60 billion a year in absenteeism, workplace accidents, higher insurance costs, waste and low productivity. This cost is passed on to consumers in the prices of goods and services.

Achan may have thought that his sin affected only him. Yet when Joshua went before the Lord to find out why his army had been defeated at Ai, God said, "Israel sinned." Achan's sin caused grief to Joshua (Josh 7:6-7), to the families of the 36 men struck down at Ai (Josh 7:5) and especially to his own family (Josh 7:24-25). Achan's sin not only hurt him, but everyone around him.

People still excuse their sin by saying, "It doesn't hurt anyone but me." But the facts prove otherwise. Sin hurts everybody either directly or indirectly. A study claimed that a New York City subway token, which costs \$1.25, would cost only \$1.19 if no one evaded fares. The cost of a property-casualty policy costs \$600, but if no one committed fraud, it would be \$540. A spreadsheet software package costs \$495, but if no one pirated programs, it would only be \$322.

The next time Satan encourages you to sin, just remember that you won't be the only one who gets hurt. Sin hurts all of us.

Satan is the only one who comes out ahead when we sin.

Joshua 7:13-26

Dealing With Sin

Theodore Epp

Several steps were involved in this account that are a guide with regard to the handling of sin and the cure of it in the believer's life.

First of all, the stolen goods were brought out from hiding. Sin, whatever its nature, has to be brought into the open. The person who attempts to hide his sin cannot prosper.

In the second place, they brought Achan to Joshua, who in this case stands in the position of Christ. Our Lord is both the Saviour from sin and the Judge of sin.

In the third place, this sin of Achan's was laid before the Lord, for all sin is directed against Him. If in the process of our sin we have affected others, then they, too, should hear our confession.

Public sin should be publicly confessed. It was only after this that Achan and his family were taken and stoned to death; then their bodies and possessions were burned. It is clear from this that the family was party to the father's sin, not innocent victims of it.

God's way of curing sin among believers in our day is given in 1 John 1:9. There we read, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The word "confess" means to "bring out into the open." We lay our sins out before the Lord and agree with Him concerning them. So we lay our sin out before the Lord completely and judge it. Thus the word "confess" also means "I agree with the Lord in this matter."

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Joshua 8:1

Solid As the Rock

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Joshua 8:1 - Then the Lord said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land."

Solid As the Rock - Gibraltar is a small peninsula of the southern coast of Spain near the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. Covering most of this peninsula is an enormous mass of limestone 1,398 feet high. This rocky mass has become a symbol of stability and certainty, and from which we get our expression, "Solid as the Rock of Gibraltar."

Yet God's word is just as solid--and even more so. Three times God spoke to Joshua of future events that were as good as done. In Joshua 6, God said of Jericho, "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king and the might men of valor" (Joshua 6:2). And that's what happened. In Joshua 8, He said to Joshua concerning Ai, "See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land" (Joshua 8:1). Sure enough, it came about (Joshua 8:18-25). Then in Joshua 10, God promised Joshua victory over the Amorites, saying, "Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand" (Joshua 10:8). Again, God came through on His word (Joshua 10:10-11).

While the Rock of Gibraltar will some day crumble, God's words never will. Jesus promised, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matt. 24:35). In a day of instability and change, we can be confident that what God says, He will do. What He declares, He will perform.

If you are feeling bewildered by upheaval in your life, look to the Rock--not the rock of Gibraltar, but the Rock of Jesus. Take Him at His word; He will never change.

Don't settle for the rock when you can have the Rock. (**Christ, the Rock, the Stone** - Click here for Scripture chain & chart (would make a great Sunday School series))

Joshua 8:10-30

New Orders and Methods

Theodore Epp

With regard to the continuing effort to subdue Ai, Joshua received new orders. He was to follow a different method than what was used to bring Jericho down.

The Lord does not always do things the same way. The method followed for Jericho's capture was not repeated for any other city or fortress in Canaan. So for Ai there was a new plan.

God never changes in His character, but He does not necessarily follow the same plans in everything He does.

In our own personal lives, God has made it plain that He is not stereotyped in the way He does things. We are told in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 that God has diversities of operations.

The passage reads: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

There is but one Holy Spirit, and He guides and plans in your life and mine and in the work of God today.

The glory belongs to the Lord and not to us. It is God who gives the strategy to retake what has been lost in our lives just as He formulated a new strategy for the capture of Ai.

The way back may seem to be hard at times. We don't like to travel that road. We don't like to face our sins. The Devil makes us ashamed, but God says the only way is to go back, as He has planned the way for us and that way only.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way" (Ps. 37:23 - [Spurgeon's note](#)).

Joshua 9:1-15

Deciding Without Praying

Theodore Epp

The Gibeonites wanted Israel to make a league with them, which was contrary to God's instructions. God had said all the Canaanites were to be destroyed. Unfortunately, the leaders of Israel believed the lying Gibeonites and did as they suggested.

We are no match in ourselves for Satan's subtle ways. We can defeat him only as we remember the admonition of Proverbs 3:5-7 to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and to lean not on our own understanding.

We are to acknowledge God in all our ways, and He will direct our paths. It is when we turn to Him that He gives us wisdom.

Israel's problem was that they were presumptuous, acting on the basis of their own wisdom. In our case Christ has been made unto us wisdom, but we must watch.

Be especially careful of decisions that have to be made under pressure. This is an area I have been careful about with regard to my own life, and it has paid off.

When someone comes along and tells me that I have to make a decision right now because the opportunity might be gone by tomorrow, then I am even more on the alert. That kind of argument, particularly with spiritual things involved, could be Satan's subtle way of deception.

Many persons have been led from the work of the Lord into side issues because they made decisions suddenly without consulting God.

"Seeing then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (see notes Ephesians 5:15; 16; 17).

Joshua 9:3-6

Making Godly Decisions

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Joshua 9:3-6- But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us."

Making Godly Decisions - Decisions are part of our life every day. We decide what to wear when we get up in the morning. We decide what to eat, what to listen to on the radio or watch on television. We make a multitude of other less-than-earthshaking choices daily. But sometimes we face decisions that have a major impact on our lives. These may affect whom we marry, where we live or what job we hold. But big or small, the choices we make should honor the Lord.

Joshua was faced with an important decision soon after he entered the land of Canaan. God had warned him not to make treaties with any of the neighboring peoples. Yet when a group of people showed up who claimed to live far away, he had to reject or accept their plea for peace. Carefully Joshua and his advisors inspected the moldy food and worn-out clothing. Yet verse 14 says, "but they did not ask counsel of the Lord." Only after they had finalized the agreement did they learn they had been tricked.

Deception and misrepresentations are rampant in our society. Salespeople try to rush us into making immediate decisions. Television promotes an unrealistic view of life. Advertisers imply promises they can't fulfill. In the midst of it all, we need to seek the counsel of the Lord. Only the principles in His Word will enable us to make choices that consistently honor Him.

When you need to make a decision, don't rely on human wisdom alone, but look to God's Word. Ask Him to reveal His truths that will enable you to make wise and godly decisions.

When the right decision is important, the right counsel is imperative.

Joshua 9:16-27

Learning From Mistakes

Theodore Epp

Once the league was made by Israel and the Gibeonites, God held Israel to it. He would not let them destroy the cities or the people. God works on this principle in other areas in our lives today.

Even when we make mistakes, we are still under obligation to carry through our part of the transactions we have entered into. Where we involve ourselves and God's Word in our testimony, we have to stick by the promise made.

Take for example the subject of marriage. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:12, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away."

If a mistake has been made in marriage by a believer's marrying an unsaved person, the Christian is to make the best of it and trust God for the rest. If the unsaved partner wants to continue on in the marriage, the marriage must not be broken up.

Israel and Joshua had made a mistake. This mistake drove the Israelites to prayer. The presence of the Gibeonites among them was a constant reminder of the mistake made. The mistakes at Ai and Gibeon were not made again during Joshua's lifetime.

Satan was not able to discourage the Israelites from going on in their conquest of Canaan. Neither should a mistake we have made cause us to give up. Let us confess it to God, forsake it and go ahead.

"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:21).

Joshua 10:1-15

God is Sovereign

Theodore Epp

Whatever God did either to the sun or the earth or whatever else was involved, the result was that there was light for a period extending about the length of another day.

God, who is the God of the impossible, aided the Israelites by prolonging the daylight and by showering hailstones upon the Amorites.

Concerning that day, Joshua 10:14 says, "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel."

Joshua knew his God. He had become acquainted with Him personally. This was especially true at the time he met the Lord as the Captain of the Lord's hosts.

Joshua's knowledge of the Lord, however, must have begun with his years in Egypt, then increased during the 40 years he spent under the tutorship of Moses in the desert.

Serving as Moses' minister, Joshua saw the mighty miracles of God and was introduced to some of the more personal aspects of God's dealing with Moses and His people

Joshua was one of the two men who dared to believe God the first time the spies were sent into Canaan. He knew that God was

sovereign and accepted God's sovereignty for his own life.

When reading in the prophets for my devotions, I am constantly impressed by the presentation of God's sovereignty, His limitless might and the finality of His Word.

What He says He will do, He does. Time in no way limits Him. Do you know this God as the Bible presents Him?

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (see note Ephesians 1:11).

Joshua 11:16-23

Possessing an Inheritance

Theodore Epp

We read in Joshua 11:23: "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war."

The important word in this verse is "inheritance." Joshua gave Israel the land for an inheritance.

But in Joshua 13:1 we see, "Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed."

This appears on the surface to be a contradiction with what chapter 11 says. God had given all the land to the Israelites, but they were responsible to go in and possess it.

They were promised, according to Joshua 1:3, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you."

We also know now that God gave them the land for an inheritance. It was divided among the tribes as is outlined for us in the Book of Joshua. Nevertheless, each tribe had to go in and possess the land in order to enjoy its benefits.

So is it with our possessions in Christ. These must be appropriated on an individual basis. The Church as a whole is blessed only as we individuals possess what is ours in Christ.

Our inheritance is in Him. In fact, He is our inheritance. A good illustration is given us in 2 Samuel 3:17,18: "Now then do it" (2 Sa 3:18). See also Colossians 3:1-3.(see notes Colossians 3:1; 3:2; 3:3)

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (see note Romans 8:17).

Joshua 13:13

Incomplete Obedience

Tony Beckett and Woodrow Kroll

Joshua 13-15, Luke 1:57-80

Key Verse: Joshua 13:13

Great promises and great victories fill the pages of the Book of Joshua. Israel moved into the Promised Land and conquered it with God's help. Jericho fell, literally. Ai was ultimately defeated. The sun even stood still-all striking evidence that God was fighting for Israel (Joshua 10:14).

Yet when the details of the conquest are examined beginning in Joshua 13:13, a sad fact needs to be noted. The Israelites did not drive out the people of Geshur and Maacah. The significance is not the names of the people but the fact that they were allowed to remain in the land. As you continue to read Joshua, you will find this phrase repeated: "did not drive them out completely."

The account of Joshua tells us about God's promises and Israel's victories. But it does not hide the fact that sometimes the fulfillment of the promises was limited by Israel's incomplete obedience. Lack of faith and incomplete obedience allowed some of the people to remain in the land.

God's instructions were clear. His promises were certain. The failure was not God's but the people's. They failed and ultimately bore the consequences.

Always strive for complete obedience; never stop short of it.

Whatever God gives you to do, do it completely. Unfinished tasks can be more troublesome than the effort of doing it the first time.

Joshua 14:6-7

Friends in Deed

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Joshua 14:6-7 - Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: "You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart."

Friends in Deed - Dr. Abraham Maslow, famed research analyst, estimated that the average American meets only about 50 percent of his need for love, interpersonal support and intimacy. In the latter stages of his research, Dr. Maslow became even more negative in his summary: "The truth is," he said, "the average American does not have a real friend in the world."

That stands in stark contrast to the friendship we see between Joshua and Caleb. First teamed up by Moses as partners to explore the land of Canaan, they also stood steadfast together when the people rebelled and wanted to stone them (Num. 14:6-10). Joshua was later selected to replace Moses as the leader of Israel, but that seemed to have no effect on their friendship. Forty-five years later we find them fighting shoulder to shoulder as Israel sought to solidify its hold on the Promised Land. And in the midst of the conflict, Joshua fulfilled a promise. Joshua 14:13 says, "And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance."

Joshua and Caleb were friends indeed and friends in deed. It was a friendship tested by time and trials, but a friendship expressed in commitment and deeds. What had been promised in words was fulfilled in deeds.

Perhaps you are blessed with such a friend as Caleb. If so, find a way today not only to say how much you appreciate this friend but to show it as well. Follow the admonition of 1 John 3:18: "Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

A friend in deed is a friend indeed.

Joshua 18:1-10

Failing to Appropriate

Theodore Epp

Joshua 18 starts on a sad note. We read in verse 1: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them."

The land was conquered. The hard battle for it was over. Yet we learn (v. 2), "And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance."

That means they had not gone into the land to possess it. It had been given to them, but they had not gone in to receive it. No wonder Joshua admonished them, saying, "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?" (v. 3).

In Joshua 21:43 we read, "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein."

The thought is that they had a home in which they could settle. The Lord gave them rest from their enemies, and "there failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (v. 45).

But they did not go in to possess it. They subdued the people and made them pay tribute. This was coexistence, not dispossession.

This program was a fruitful source of trouble for Israel. It is also a dangerous one for us to follow with regard to sin and the failure to appropriate our possessions in Christ.

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (see note Hebrews 10:38).

Joshua 18:2-3

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

How Long?

Joshua 18:2-3 - But there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: "How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?"

How Long? Some people refuse to wait. On June 22, 1997, Thomas and Corilee McClurkin peacefully celebrated their golden anniversary. But it wasn't that way 50 years ago. The month of June in 1947 was exceptionally soggy in Nebraska. The Loup River flooded its banks and stranded the bride-to-be in her hometown of Poole. Undaunted, Thomas set out in knee-deep water in an old Chevy. Upon reaching a flimsy railroad bridge that had been nearly washed away, he abandoned his car, crawled across the bridge and walked to Ravenna. Once there he persuaded the owner of a two-seat airplane to fly him to Poole to pick up his bride. The marriage took place only 13 hours late.

This kind of eagerness, however, seemed to be lacking among the Israelites. Seven of the tribes had yet to make any headway in possessing their inheritance. Even though God promised that He would give them the land, they failed to move forward aggressively. Joshua's accusation (v. 3) implies that the problem was not with availability but with motivation. How long, he wondered, were they going to wait?

The same question could be asked of many Christians. How long will it be before we avail ourselves of the vast spiritual riches God has made possible? He has given us the privilege of life-changing prayer. He has made it possible for us to study His Word in any number of translations. We are new creatures in Christ, with all the potential that can be found in such a position. When will we possess these riches?

Don't delay. Begin today to possess all the spiritual benefits God offers you. Now is the time for you to take what God has promised.

God can only give what you are willing to take.

Joshua 22:4

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Rest for the Weary by

Joshua 22:4 - And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan.

Rest for the Weary - William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, received a letter from his wife while he was on a long trip. She wrote in part, "Your Tuesday's notes arrived safe, and I was rejoiced to hear of the continued prosperity of the work, though sorry you were so worn out. I fear the effect of all this excitement and exertion upon your health, and though I would not hinder your usefulness, I would caution you against an injudicious prodigality of your strength. Remember a long life of steady, consistent, holy labor will produce twice as much fruit as one shortened and destroyed by spasmodic and extravagant exertions; be careful and sparing of your strength when and where exertion is unnecessary."

God also is aware of this truth. After five years of battles, Joshua declared, "God has given rest." It was not that the land had been completely conquered, but it was time for the people to rest anyway.

Some Christians are quick to remind us that "Satan never takes a vacation." That may be true, but Satan is not the example we want to follow. One scholar who studied the Gospels claims that during the three years of Jesus' ministry, ten periods of resting are mentioned. If Jesus felt it necessary to punctuate His ministry with seasons of rest, how much more so should we.

Being alone and resting for a while is not selfish; it's Christlike. Taking a vacation is not fleshly; it's spiritual. God's kingdom is not advanced by those who work themselves into a coronary or nervous breakdown. God gives rest to the weary, so don't be too proud to take it.

Come apart for rest or you may come apart forever

Joshua 23:1-8

Theodore Epp

Courageous in Godly Living

To be courageous in the face of dangers confronting them was not only God's will but also His command. This is equally true with regard to us today.

We are to be courageous in godly living as we seek to live according to the Word of God. All three members of the Trinity are working in our behalf so that all we have to do is by faith accept and appropriate what has been provided.

We may face defeat at times, but we are not to dwell upon our defeat. We are to return to the Lord, confess our wrong-doing, forsake it and go on with Him. We are to forget those things that are behind. There is more land to be possessed.

A negative admonition follows. Joshua said, "That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you." There were still many pagan people remaining in Canaan, but the Israelites were not to have fellowship with them.

God's people were not to copy the heathen forms of worship but to be completely separated from them. There was to be no coexistence with the enemy.

This is also true in the Christian life. There is to be a putting off of what is evil and a putting on of the armor of God (see note Ephesians 6:10-17). The Israelites were to cleave to the Lord their God and put off the ways and beliefs of the Canaanites.

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him" (see note Ephesians 3:12).

Joshua 23:6-8

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Pass It Along

Joshua 23:6-8 - Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, but you shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day.

Pass It Along - Sometimes we wonder why God allows certain things to happen to us. "Why did God allow my child to die?" "Why was I stricken with cancer?" "Why do I have to face such a struggle with finances?" There's no one answer that fits every situation. But sometimes God allows us to undergo certain experiences so we can pass along the things we learn to those following us.

As he assumed the leadership of Israel, Joshua faced times of great fear and uncertainty. In the midst of those difficulties, God encouraged him with the exhortation, "only be strong and very courageous" (Joshua 1:7). Furthermore, the Lord commanded him, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth ... that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it" (Joshua 1:8). Joshua had learned a great deal from the hardships he suffered and, as he approached the latter years of his life, he shared this wisdom with the ones who would be leaders after he was gone.

As God's people, we have a responsibility to pass on to the younger generation those truths God has taught us. Some call this "mentoring." The apostle Paul exhorted both Timothy and Titus to encourage the older generation to be teachers and encouragers of those who are younger (see notes 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:3; 2:4; 2:5).

Don't waste the wisdom God has shared with you. Sometimes younger people don't seem to want to listen, so be creative in your mentoring. Learn to pass on truth in the form of stories or even write them in a notebook. Don't let the truths God has taught you go to waste.

If God considers it a lesson worth learning, we must consider it worth sharing.

Joshua 23:9-13

Theodore Epp

The Way to Victory

We learn in Joshua 23:9,10 that nothing can stand before the person who will dare to trust God. Everything is in the favor of those who trust Him. With God on their side, total victory is assured.

This is true with regard to us in our spiritual warfare. The enemies are great and more powerful than we are, but they are helpless when we go in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Admonition was added to these assurances as Joshua spoke to the people. He warned them that they must be careful how they

conducted themselves and that they, above all, must love the Lord.

This positive and then negative approach would serve to alert the Israelites to their blessings and also to their dangers.

We, too, must not turn back in defeat but go forward in Christian victory. There are evil things that will entangle us and ensnare us, so we must get rid of them. These may be but little things in our lives, but the little things can destroy us.

We are warned in Hebrews 12:1 (note) to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Nothing is to be allowed to hinder us. The weights spoken of in this passage may not be sins, but they could lead to sin or at least they could hinder us.

There is a danger of losing what we have gained. We can be sure of this: Our sin will find us out.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

Joshua 23:14-16

Theodore Epp

Not One Thing Has Failed

Joshua 23:14-16; Hebrews 6:16-20 (see notes Hebrews 6:16; 17; 18; 19; 20)

Recognizing that his death was imminent, Joshua told the Israelites that he was going the way of all the earth and then reminded them, "Ye 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" (Josh. 23:14).

What a faithful God! What He promised He fulfilled.

As I think back over my own life and God's dealing with us at Back to the Bible Broadcast, I too have to say that not one thing God has promised has failed. I have failed at times to appropriate what God has for me, but He has never failed.

It is this very fact that should cause us to press on with Him. He is faithful and willing, in fact eagerly desirous, to see us go on to the end in victory. So why not appropriate all things that God has provided for us?

A serious warning is also given. God was faithful in keeping His promises to the Israelites. He was faithful in blessing. He was equally faithful in judgment when that was necessary.

The same warning is needed by us. God has offered us everything in Christ. He will not fail, but if we go back in our Christian experience, we will be the losers.

To know truth and not obey it is to retrogress. God wants us to grow in the knowledge of Christ and appropriate by faith all that has been provided for us.

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (see note 2 Timothy 2:13).

Joshua 24:1-13

Theodore Epp

All of Grace

In this final part of his discourse, Joshua rehearsed God's wonderful deliverances of Israel, beginning with God's calling of the people in Abraham and His protection and leading of the patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob.

Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the opening of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army are briefly retold.

God's protection and provision for them in the wilderness, His deliverance of them from the Amorites, from those who would have enslaved them and tried to curse them, and His bringing Israel safely into Canaan, giving them a glorious land as a gift, are recounted.

Then Joshua added that God did not give them the possessions in Canaan because they deserved them. They did not merit His gifts.

God said, "I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards

and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat."

This is true, too, with our eternal salvation. We do not merit it by good works (see notes Ephesians 2:8; 2:9) or by keeping the Law (see notes Romans 3:20;21; 22).

Salvation becomes ours only as we believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (see note Romans 11:6).

Joshua 24:13

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Not For Sale

Joshua 24:13 - "I [God] have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant."

Not for Sale - During the Spanish-American War, Clara Barton, the founder of the Red Cross, was working in Cuba. One day Colonel Theodore Roosevelt came to her and offered to buy food for some of his sick and wounded Rough Riders. But she refused to sell him what he wanted. Roosevelt could not understand. He cared about his men, and he was willing to pay for the supplies out of his own funds. So he went to the surgeon in charge, who said to him, "Colonel, just ask for it!" A smile broke over Roosevelt's face. Now he understood--the provisions were not for sale. "I will ask for it," he said, and when he did, he got the food at once.

Joshua reminded the people that all they possessed--their land, their cities and their vineyards--were not the result of their own efforts. Certainly they had confronted the enemy. Obviously they had engaged in many dangerous and bloody battles. But those victories were not the ultimate source of their possessions. Instead, all that they owned was a gift from God.

God is not in the retail business. All of our good deeds, our generous gifts, our religious activities could not begin to buy our salvation. But God is willing to give it to us. When we receive Christ as our Savior, all that God has is ours for the asking.

Enjoy God's gracious gifts today. Thank Him for providing them without price and without cost. They are yours not because you buy them, but because God gives them.

God's gifts are free, but they are not cheap.

Joshua 24:14,15

Theodore Epp

We Must Choose

Joshua 24:14,15

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Joshua admonished the people first of all to fear the Lord. This does not mean to be afraid of Him but to place reverential trust in Him. With such trust in the Lord they would follow Him with confidence. With such fear of the Lord there would be a hatred for evil.

So what he was asking the Israelites to do was to have an attitude of heart of complete trust in God. Because of this, then, they would avoid evil and walk in faith.

The second admonition was to serve the Lord. Israel was to serve Him in sincerity and in truth. After a proper attitude of heart comes the activity of the mind and the body.

To serve in truth means to serve in perfection and with stability. For us this means to serve the Lord now with a perfect heart.

We must put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand against the wiles of the Devil. We need this in order to fight the battles of the Lord successfully.

Joshua warned the Israelites, in the third place, to put away those things that God did not allow. The idolatry so characteristic of Canaan, with all its attendant evil, unbelief, carelessness and backsliding, was to be put away.

It was not a matter of following majority opinion but of finding out what God wanted and doing it. Joshua made it very plain that the Israelites had to choose whom they would serve. We, too, face the same issue.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Joshua 24:15

Dr. Woodrow Kroll

You've Got to Choose

Joshua 24:15 - "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

You've Got to Choose - Sometime ago many newspapers carried a story about a woman who was divorcing her husband after discovering he had two other wives and several children by each of them. His explanation? He couldn't bear the thought of hurting any of them, so he had married all three. He was a traveling salesman, so he was able to carry out the farce for several years. Rather than facing a hard choice, he took the easy way out.

Once established in the Promised Land, the Israelites also were confronted with a multitude of choices. And the choices weren't necessarily easy. They could worship the gods of Egypt. These were gods that their parents had known from their long years of servitude. Familiarity made that tempting. On the other hand, the gods of the Amorites, the nation they had conquered, offered opportunities to indulge the flesh, which many likely found attractive. Some may have stood betwixt and between, but Joshua was not afraid to make the hard decision. Boldly he declared, "As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."

Choosing to serve the Lord is not always an easy decision. Sometimes it means going against the religious beliefs of your family. Other times peer pressure and the desire to "fit in" make us hesitant to declare openly our commitment to the Lord. Many people find it easiest to behave like a chameleon, changing colors to fit whatever group they happen to be with. But that only temporarily avoids making the hard decision.

Today, decide to take a stand. Whom will you serve? Will it be yourself? Will it be the gods of pleasure or wealth or ease? Or will you choose the God who loves you? Making a decision for Christ may be hard, but it's a choice you will never regret.

The easy choice is seldom the right choice.

Joshua 24:16-33

Theodore Epp

The People's Choice

The people were decided and definite in their reaction to Joshua's admonition. They responded with a definite decision to follow the Lord.

Warning the people that they were making no light decision, Joshua said to them, "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" (Josh. 24:19).

They needed this reminder. God is holy and cannot coexist with sin. He is a jealous God and will not take a secondary place. We cannot serve God and live in sin.

The Israelites assured Joshua that they would obey the Lord, for they said (Josh. 24:21,22), "Nay; but we will serve the Lord. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses."

There was even a covenant made, and Joshua took a great stone and placed it under an oak as a witness of the people's intention to serve God.

The generation that made the promise was true to its word. We learn in verse 31: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel."

This was a good beginning, and what a different history we would have had if each succeeding generation of Israelites had reached the same decision and stayed with it.

"For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there few that find it" (see note Matthew 7:14).

THE CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND

Devotional Commentary on Joshua

■ Max Frazier, Jr.

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I would like to share with you some thoughts from one of my favorite Old Testament books. The Book of Joshua was written by the man who succeeded Moses as the leader of the people of Israel. It relates the events of the conquest of the land promised to these people by God. It is not a definitive account, but is a record of the major events of that conquest. The book closes with the land being divided to the various tribes. The name, Joshua, means "God is salvation." Throughout this book, Joshua is depicted as a man of prayer, courage, dependence upon God, faith, leadership, enthusiasm, and fidelity. He ranks second only to David as being one of the greatest military leaders Israel has ever had. The theme of the Book of Joshua is "the conquest of the promised land." I have chosen as the key verse of the book, Joshua 1:9, which states,

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

What a fantastic promise is made to us in that verse. "Don't be afraid!" That is what God told Joshua. In fact, the Bible tells us 365 times that we are not to be afraid. (I find it more than a coincidence that God gives us one command not to fear for each day of the year. I believe that God knew that being fearful would be one of the great problems mankind would face everyday.) A study was

conducted concerning those things which caused people to become afraid. The results of that study were interesting. Only twenty percent of our worries or fears are legitimate. That means that eighty percent are either unreal or things over which we have no control. Someone has said, "Worry (which really is at the heart of many of our fears) is assuming responsibility God never intended you to have." The late Corrie ten Boom, a survivor of the Nazi holocaust, wrote, "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength." God can set us free from fear, but He does not always set us free from the difficulties nor the problems which might become a catalyst for fear.

Joshua faced many uncertainties:

1. The death of Moses: Would the people accept him as the new leader?
2. A flooded Jordan: How would they get across?
3. Jericho and beyond: How would they defeat the giants which were in the land?
4. His age: Joshua was well past the age of 80.

Could he bridge the generation gap? Joshua was afraid, so God had to give him a pep talk in being strong and courageous. Tomorrow we will begin to examine those truths which God shared with this great leader. Friends, give your fears to God today. He knows your heart and your situation. He is asking you to be strong and courageous, and you can do this with His help.

A REMEDY FOR FEAR Joshua 1:1-3

The Book of Joshua opens with these words: "After the death of Moses the Lord's servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant." In order for Israel to experience the blessings of the promised land, in order for their fears and worries to be erased, a death had to occur before the blessings could be given. The death of Moses represented the last remnant of the old order. Moses was under a sentence of death because of his disobedience to God by striking the rock instead of speaking to the rock. As long as Moses lived, Israel could never experience the blessings of the promised land. William Lasor, in his book titled, Great Personalities of the Bible, wrote: God expects each generation to get up on its own feet and face its own problems. God does not want us to stand around saying, 'Well, now, look at Moses. There was a great man! We will never have another man like Moses!'...Moses is dead. Great man that he was, he is dead. Get up and face the problems of your day and your age! Arise, go over this Jordan. Do not long for the past. Do the work of the present, and God says, 'I will be with you.' You and I cling to our old sinful natures, don't we? In First Corinthians 15:31, Paul makes an unusual statement when he proclaims, "I die daily." Why was this so necessary in order for Paul to be set free from his fears and worries? Paul realized that he lived in a body which had to be daily yielded to God in order that he might experience the spiritual blessings of God. One of the greatest remedies for anxiety and worry and fear is obedience to the command for us to move forward spiritually. We are to be crucified daily so that we might truly live. The song writer captured the importance of this thought of dying to self and to sin when he wrote: We cannot be channels of blessing If our lives are not free from known sin; We will barriers be and a hindrance To those we are trying to win. As we begin a new year, a new millennium, God would challenge each of us to move forward spiritually so that we might walk in the fullness of obedience to God's will. Secondly, we are to move forward steadily. God states these words to Joshua in verse 3, Everywhere you go, you will be on land I have given you. In Exodus 23, God had told Moses that, when they got to the Promised Land, God would drive the enemy out little by little so that the people might more carefully appropriate what God had given to them. One of the words of wisdom which I received as a teenager was from a dear saint of God who said, "Max, don't ask God for more until you already are faithful in what He has given to you." I wish I could state that I have always followed those words of wisdom. But, at times, I have been in such a hurry that I have relied more on what I could do than on what God has done. I am daily reminded of those words of the chorus: In His time, in His time, He makes all things beautiful in His time. Lord, please show me every day as You're teaching me Your ways, that You do just what You say in Your time. Lord, as we close our study today, we ask that you would help each of us as the family of the Village Schools, to move forward not only spiritually, but also steadily in this coming year. Not that we would receive any praise or glory, but that You would be honored and praised. We give You thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE PROMISES OF THE WORD Joshua 1:7-9

It was a frightening responsibility which God was entrusting to Joshua. He was aware of the nature of these people God was placing under his leadership. For forty years he had witnessed their mood swings, from complete surrender to God to complete rebellion against God. He had seen how they had treated Moses. He had witnessed their words of scorn and contempt for his leadership. I believe Joshua was fearful. In fact, I think Joshua might have been terrified at the prospects lying before him. I know I would have been. Yet God reassured Joshua of His continued presence. He could be strong and courageous because God was with him. How was Joshua to know this presence of God? I believe it was to come through the daily meditations upon the Word of God. We read in verses 7 through 9 these words: Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you: do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and

successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. As we read and meditate and reflect upon the Word of God we become increasingly more aware of who God is. We begin to share an intimacy with Him that excites our hearts. We don't need to be Bible scholars to appreciate Scripture; we just need to be faithful, consistent Bible students. T.B. Maston said, The Christians who have turned the world upside down have been men and women with a vision in their hearts and the Bible in their hands. One only has to think of such giants as Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Carey, Jonathan Edwards, D.L. Moody, and Billy Graham to realize the significance of these saints came only because of their devotion to the Word of God. It has been said that "some Christians drink deeply at the fountain of God's Word; others only gargle." It is time for us to become intoxicated with the Word of God! The times demand this of us if we are to dare hope to make an impact upon our world for Christ.

CROSSING YOUR JORDANS Joshua 3:1-5

Today, we begin with chapter 3, one of the most exciting miracles which God performed for Israel prior to their entrance into the Promised Land. Within the text I notice at least three key ideas which, when implemented by each of us, will allow us to more successfully cross those Jordans which lie in front of us. We begin by noticing that Israel had been in the wilderness for forty years. God had provided for her every need - manna from heaven, water from the rock, protection from the enemies - but the wilderness was NOT the land of promise. Ahead lay the land flowing with milk and honey, the land promised to Abraham and his seed forever. But, in order to get to that promised land of blessings, they had to cross the Jordan. Now the river was at flood stage which meant that it was over a mile wide and six to twelve feet deep with many swift rapids. The Jordan represented a seemingly insurmountable barrier to reaching God's best. Friends, the Jordan represents those things in our lives which prevent us from fully appropriating God's best for us. They represent those things which we might consider to be impossible. Every time I read this chapter I am reminded of that little chorus I learned so many years ago in Sunday school: Got any rivers you think are uncrossable? Got any mountains you can't tunnel through? God specializes in things thought impossible, He does the things others cannot do. Our Jordans should not be the cause of fear, but should become opportunities for trusting the Lord. The very first step in a successful crossing of the Jordan is following God's guidance. We read in verses 3 and 4, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before..." Joshua cautioned Israel that they were to follow the ark as they crossed the flooded Jordan River. They were not to attempt to cross it in their own strength or planning, either through the construction of bridges or the discovery of fords. They had to follow the Lord. And Joshua gave them the reason: they had not been here before. With the exception of the two spies from the present and the two spies from the past, Caleb and Joshua himself, not one person knew what lay across that Jordan River. They were going to have to trust the Lord. Whether it is a new day or a new week or a new year or a new millennium, we must follow after God. We do not know anything about the future, but God does. We have never been here before, but God has. He knows the way. We just need to follow him.

MORE THOUGHTS ON CROSSING YOUR JORDANS Joshua 3:5

In our last study, we began to focus our attention upon some key ideas which we might observe within this third chapter of Joshua that would enable us to successfully cross those Jordan River experiences which will occur during this coming year. We noticed first, in verses 3 and 4, the need for Israel to follow the guidance from the Lord. They were not to try to accomplish a crossing in their own strength or through their own devices. Neither should we, but we should place our full confidence and trust into the hands of the Lord. The final two thoughts are found in verse 5, which reads: Then Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you." The second command from God to Israel was that they consecrate themselves. Here was the command that Israel should examine their souls and their relationships with God. It was a time to confess any known sin. It was a time to enter into a right relationship with the One who had promised the land to them. Before God will give deliverance and blessing, He needs clean vessels. He needs vessels yielded in obedience to Him. Paul proclaimed in 2 Corinthians 7:1, Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. Paul also admonished Timothy with these words: If a man cleanses himself from the latter (wickedness, mentioned in verse 19), he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (2 Timothy 2:21). God never fills us as long as we are experimenting to see how far and how fast we can travel with the world! Finally, the people were to get excited about what God was going to do. The Christian life is to be an exciting one. God does not call us to a lifetime of boredom and mediocrity. He desires that His servants experience the blessings and joys of life. We serve a God who, according to the words of the Apostle Paul, is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). So, what lies ahead in the coming year as we face those impossible Jordans? I really don't know, but I can share with you some precious thoughts from Isaiah's pen which underscores God's truths from Joshua 3. Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior (Isaiah 43:1-3). God is more than able to see you through.

MEMORIAL STONES Joshua 4

By faith Israel had crossed the Jordan. Now you would have expected them to rush on toward Jericho. After all God had promised them victory there. But no, God first leads them to a little, insignificant place called Gilgal. This would become a place of waiting for them. Why wait? Why not charge straight into the battle? I have found that God gives us waiting time to renew us, to recharge our spiritual batteries, to give us new insights. So many of us, after crossing our Jordans, rush to our Jerichos, but God desires to first call us to Gilgal. Yes, the Jerichos are more exciting because this is where the action lies; while the Gilgals are more difficult because it is hard to wait on God. It has been said that the outstanding characteristics of the great New England preacher Phillips Brooks (perhaps best known for his Christmas song titled, "O Little Town of Bethlehem") were poise and imperturbability. His intimate friends, however, knew that at times he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him pacing the floor like a caged lion. "What is the trouble, Dr. Brooks?" asked the friend. "The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!" One of the things which God asked Joshua and the people of Israel to do here at Gilgal was to build a monument to commemorate God's bringing them across the Jordan River in a miraculous way. Memorial stones. Places of remembrance. We all need them to help us to never forget the workings of God in our lives. Your memorial stone may be at a summer camp where you came to know the Lord Jesus. It may be an altar in a church where you surrendered your life in service for the Lord. It also might be a college campus or just a place under a tree somewhere. It might also be the memories of a significant experience while studying the Scriptures through a class at the Village Schools. But at that place, wherever it might be, you had an unforgettable encounter with God. There may not be any physical monument there, as Israel created at Gilgal, but there is a mental monument. And it is good when those times come and discouragement sets in, to go back and to be refreshed with what happened in the past. We can never return to that experience, even as God never again dried up the Jordan River for Israel. But we can draw strength and hope for the present by remembering that the God of yesterday is still the God of today and tomorrow.

MORE LESSONS LEARNED AT GILGAL Joshua 5

Let us take a walk into Jericho. We hear reports that Israel had been successful in crossing the flood swollen Jordan. We have heard how Israel's God had dried up the waters of the Jordan and it reminds us of the reports we have heard about the Red Sea. The order is given to make the city secure. Panic has struck. We observe that the people hope that their gods will protect them in the coming attack, but they are not so confident. They seem to be a doomed people. Now the camp of Israel knew the fears within Jericho. There is an old military tactic which states that you "get them while they are down." We might have expected Israel to rush toward Jericho to take advantage of the situation. But God has sent them instead to Gilgal - a place of remembrance, a place of memorial as we noticed in our last study. Here, in this fifth chapter, let us observe some more lessons which God desires Israel to learn in order for them to become successful in their receiving the gift of the Promised Land. We read in verse 2 these words, At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again." Now this seems like a very unreasonable request of God. He was really asking Joshua to disable his army for a period of time. Now you might be saying, "Why was this circumcision so important?" In order for us to appreciate the significance, we must travel back into the book of Genesis and chapter 17. There God commands that Abraham be circumcised as an outward act of obedience displaying the faith Abraham had in God's promises. Circumcision was the outward sign of a complete yielding to God. It was the outward manifestation of a clean heart. Its purpose was to show a people separated unto God. For forty years, Israel was under punishment for their sins at Kadesh in refusing to enter into the Promised Land. Now, Israel was in that land but could not enjoy its riches until they made a complete break with their sin. Their uncircumcised state reminded them of their sinful past. In verse 9, after the circumcision had occurred, God stated, Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you. What did God mean? "The reproach of Egypt" was at the center of Israel's sinful way of life. They had worshipped Egypt's god - the golden calf. They had desired Egypt's way of life instead of the goodness of the Promised Land. They had a constant desire to go back to the old way when the going got tough. Yet, now with their circumcision, they were stating to God that they were willing to break with the past and to trust God for the future. If we are to be successful in our Christian walk, we, too, must be willing to make a complete break with sin, to realize all of God's forgiveness. You and I are not adequate in ourselves to deal with sin. We make excuses for them, cover them up, overlook them, and even ignore them. I like the statement attributed to Billy Sunday about sin. This is what that great baseball player turned evangelist said about his fight against sin: I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, and I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist. I'll butt it as long as I've got a head. I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. When I'm old and fistless and footless and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to Glory and it goes home to perdition. I like that statement and that attitude.

STILL MORE LESSONS LEARNED AT GILGAL Joshua 5:10

So far, in our brief study of this marvelous chapter, we have observed that God has used the time Israel has spent at Gilgal to remind them of His powerful and miraculous presence (the memorial stones), and to cause the reproach of Egypt to be removed from them (through the act of circumcision). Now the way for their fellowship with God was reopened. We read in verse 10, On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. This is the only the third Passover which the people of Israel had celebrated. Of course we all remember that very first instance, there in Egypt on the night in which the angel of death went throughout the land killing the firstborn among the Egyptians. It was

Israel's hour of deliverance. The second occurrence came a year later, there at the foot of Mount Sinai, just as Israel was preparing for the journey into the Promised Land. We read about this time in Numbers 9:5. But, then came the sins of the refusal to enter into the Promised Land, and Israel spent the next thirty-eight years or so living out of fellowship with God because of sin. Now, they are prepared for the restoration of that fellowship once again. Sins have been confessed and forgiven. The Passover has been observed by a new generation who is eager for God's precious gift to them. One of the things which I observed in verse 10, which describes this time of Passover celebration, is its location. It is on the plains in front of Jericho. This is not a place of ease, but a place of distress. Sometimes the places of greatest intimacy with God are those places and times of deepest affliction and distress. God desires that we enjoy our fellowship with Him anywhere. Just ask Peter, "Peter, where can you experience the fellowship with God?", and he might reply, "In prison while awaiting my death." We read, in Acts 12, that Peter had such fellowship with God that he could actually sleep the night before his impending death. Just ask Paul, "Paul, where can you experience the fellowship with God?", and he might also reply, "In prison after being falsely accused and beaten." We read, in Acts 16, that Paul and his traveling companion Silas, actually sang praises to God there in that jail cell in Philippi. Just ask Daniel, "Daniel, where can you experience the fellowship with God?", and he might reply, "In a lions' den." We read, in Daniel 6, that Daniel experienced the very presence of God while there in that place of death. One more example. Ask Shadrach and his two friends, "Where can you experience the fellowship with God?", and they will reply, "Even while in a furnace of fire." Friends, wherever we are, God is present. Therefore, wherever we are, God desires to fellowship with us. Remember these familiar words from David, Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Yes, in the presence of those enemies of discouragement, despair, and even doubt.

VICTORY AT JERICHO Joshua 6:2-5

We begin our study in Joshua this week with one of the most familiar stories in all of the Bible - the conquest of the city of Jericho. There is an old spiritual which proclaims that "Joshua fi't the battle of Jericho...and the walls came tumblin' down." You probably sang that song with your high school choir while growing up. I know I did. It was a fun song to sing. But I think there are some things wrong with the premise of that song. First, I am not sure that Joshua was the one who fought the battle. He was a participant as were his men. But the real combatant was God. This was His fight. And the battle was won not through might or power, but through the Spirit of God. The battle belonged to the Lord. Let's look at this thought for a moment or two. God had given Joshua some very unusual commands. I am sure that the following thoughts went through the mind of Joshua: Why the marching and not the fighting? Why the silence and not the shouting? Why the waiting? Why use seven days instead of one day? I am sure that as Israel marched during those days, the people on the walls of Jericho, whose hearts were already filled with fear, might have begun to jeer and to call the Israelites names and may have even thought that Israel was afraid of them. I am sure that even Israel was unsure as to what to expect. The silence was hard, and yet the success of the mission depended upon their absolute and unquestioned obedience to the plan of God. Perhaps on the first day they handled it with the thought that it was a plan to intimidate those in Jericho; but as the days dragged on, they had to begin to wonder themselves. How we need to remember that our ways are not God's ways. Our puny plans may not be His almighty plans. I am sure that they asked themselves why Joshua would ask them to take thirteen trips around the city. I believe it took that long for everyone to realize it was utterly impossible for them to conquer Jericho. They finally realized that they could not do it. They came to understand that only God could. One of the lessons which God has been teaching me is that as long as I think I can handle a problem and do it alone, I miss out on the infinite resources of God. Sometimes God has to take me around a problem thirteen times until I come to recognize that in my own strength, I am not able to conquer it. It is when I come to that realization that I can finally achieve victory. Well, so much for the song that it was Joshua who fought the battle at Jericho. It was God who was doing the fighting and He accomplished His purposes through the obedience of His people.

MORE THOUGHTS ON JERICHO Joshua 6:8-21

Yesterday we began our brief look at this most famous of battles recorded for us in the Bible. We even mentioned that familiar song which states that "Joshua fi't the battle of Jericho, and the walls came tumblin' down." Now, we mentioned that really this song is in error because the battle was not really Joshua's but God's. It really was His plan that Israel was to follow. The second problem with this familiar song is the phrase "and the walls came tumblin' down." I don't think that the walls tumbled down. I think they fell down flat just like someone pushing down a wall of dominoes. And great was their collapse. With their means of protection removed, the people of Jericho were easily vanquished. This astonishing victory was not the result of military genius or strategic planning. It came as Joshua and the people were obedient to the will and desires of God. As they were marching, even though they did not know what was going to happen, they knew God was in their midst. Every night, as they returned to Gilgal, they saw the monument of stones and were reminded of the mighty presence of God. We would do well to remember that wherever we go, we do not go alone. Our Lord goes with us. Remember the truth of those powerful words of Paul to the Roman believers: Since God is for us, who can be against us?" A few years ago, Pastor Richard Halverson, Chaplain of the United States Senate, wrote these words. Listen to them carefully for they contain a powerful message for you and for me this day. Walking by faith means walking not by sight. Does this mean that one walks blindly? No more than the pilot of a 747 flies blind when he is being talked into a landing by the control tower. No more than when a pilot believes his instruments rather than the seat of his pants. One of the hard lessons a pilot learns is to trust his instruments when they disagree with his feelings. He is in much greater danger by depending on his feelings than by depending

upon his instruments. Ceiling zero - visibility zero - very poor conditions to fly by sight....But the aircraft lands safely when the pilot listens to the word from the control tower and obeys it. To walk by faith is to heed the Word of God...to read it, to know it, to learn it, to obey it. It isn't those who walk by faith that louse up their lives....Rather, it is those who walk by sight! Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12) What a tremendous lesson God was teaching Israel there at Jericho. They were to always walk by faith and not by sight. They were to trust God and not their own senses. What a tremendous lesson we each must learn every day of our lives.

DEFEAT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE - WHY? Joshua 7:1-5

Oh, what rejoicing there must have been within the camp of Israel when they saw those walls of Jericho come falling down. You can almost picture the excitement written upon their faces as they entered the city. Ten miles west of Jericho was another walled city which needed conquering. The city was named Ai. Joshua sent out a scouting party to look over the situation and the report was that a small army was needed there. A few thousand troops, three thousand to be exact, were sent on this mission. But instead of victory, the army experienced a humiliating defeat right in the presence of all of Israel. The thrill of victory had become the agony of defeat. Why did this happen? A lot of things went wrong at Ai. First, there was the cocky attitude on the part of Israel's army. Ai looked so small compared to Jericho. They thought taking it would be easy. They had failed to give God the credit for the victory at Jericho. After the battle was over they applauded themselves. Dependence upon God had become accolades for themselves. How easy it is for us to praise ourselves when something goes right: We make that big sale; we preach a powerful sermon; we even lead someone to Christ. We ponder, "How did I do that?" And so we try to duplicate that effort over again, usually failing as did Israel. Oh the consequences of the sin of self-confidence. I believe that the sin of pride or the sin of self-confidence has been instrumental in destroying more Christian lives than any other particular sin. I have observed church programs to fail miserably. I have seen financial drives fail disastrously. I have witnessed people, whose intentions were great, attempt something profound for God only to become discouraged and fail in their effort. In each case, the problem was not with the program, or the financial drive, or the people themselves. The problem was that each was attempted in the strength of the flesh rather than in the strength of the Lord. Tomorrow we will continue to focus on some of the other problems which led to this shocking defeat at Ai.

MORE THOUGHTS ON WHY WE EXPERIENCE DEFEAT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE Joshua 7:6-15

The joys of Jericho, dear Village Line friends, had been replaced with the sorrows of thirty-six funerals in the camp of Israel, and the agonies which go with a defeat in warfare. According to our text here in Joshua 7, General Joshua even questioned the purposes of God thinking that God had caused the defeat. Despair was high. Thoughts were even entertained about whether they should recross the Jordan River. So, why all this agony? Why the defeat? As we observed in our last study together, one of the causes was the sin of self-confidence or pride. The army leaders thought that surely, after the great victory at Jericho, the city of Ai would be a piece of cake. They had forgotten who the real victor was at Jericho, namely God. The second problem was the lack of prayer. This problem necessarily flowed out of the first. When we become self-assured, then we don't need God. There is no time for prayer or consultation with Him because we feel there is no need. How wrong can we be! If only Joshua had prayed, he would have known the dangers which lay under Achan's tent. I believe that Joshua was caught up in the pride and self-confidence of the hour. But the saddest part of all was that Joshua did not know God was no longer with them. Joshua felt that everything was as it should be. Failure to pray always makes us insensitive to sin. Samson, after having finally told a nagging Delilah about his hair, awakens from his sleep and the Bible says that he did not know that his strength had departed from him (see Judges 16:20). When we march forward without prayer we are asking for trouble.

THE PROBLEM WITH ACHAN Joshua 7:16-26

Ever been a part of a group which got into trouble? Oh, you were not the one who did wrong, but you got punished because you were with the person who did cause the trouble. You might have missed a recess during a school day. You might have lost your driving privileges from your parents. As hard as you tried to convince your teacher or your parents that you were not responsible for the trouble, you were just an innocent by-stander, you still were punished. Now you know how Israel must have felt when God told them that there was a person in the camp who had broken God's commandments and had taken some of the materials possessions of Jericho about which God had said that all should be destroyed. Thirty-six of your friends had died because of this one man. Moreover, God had said that He would no longer be with you in your conquest of this Promised Land because of this one person. "But Lord, He is just one man. Why punish all of us?" Achan had sinned greatly. His problem began with his eyes. He saw, then he coveted, then he took, and then he hid those things which God had said were to be destroyed. His sin is so common. No, I don't mean we are all thieves. But, how often have we covered up our sins. And, like Achan, at times we think we have done a pretty good job of that. Achan had probably gone with the army to Ai and had participated in the battle just as if nothing was wrong. Nobody knew - except God. Nothing can be hidden from Him. I have often wondered how Achan must have felt that day when all of Israel marched before Joshua. One by one the field of the potentially guilty were eliminated until only one remained - Achan. Now he was caught! His confession, though real, was forced from him. Repentance present? Probably not! Yet the lesson is ever certain: Be sure your sins will find you out. And how we need to remember that sin affects more than just me. Sin in the life of one person

can be the one thing preventing God from blessing a group. Remember those words of Paul to the Corinthians: Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?" (1 Corinthians 5:6) Paul was proclaiming what Israel had experienced at Ai, that one person who chooses to live in disobedience to God can affect the lives of others. The writer of Hebrews warns us with these words: See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by it many be defiled (Hebrews 12:15)

THE CONQUEST OF AI Joshua 8:1-29

Welcome to another exciting study in God's Word, particularly in the Book of Joshua. You might remember that we ended our last study with Israel in a particular fix. The joys of the victory at Jericho had faded into the realities of defeat and an awareness of the presence of sin in the camp. Thirty-six soldiers had perished in the battle and the entire family of Achan had paid the consequences for their sins. Truly, chapter seven of Joshua is a classic reminder of the truth that the wages of sin is death. There is an old proverb which states, "It is always darkest before the dawn." There seems to be a lot of biblical truth in that statement. We can see it proven here in chapter eight of Joshua. How brilliantly the opening words of this chapter come to us, Now the Lord said to Joshua. It is a hint that, as far as God was concerned, everything was back to normal. I believe that in verse one we observe three key things that brought Joshua and Israel to the place of victory at Ai. Often, in our Christian life, the conquest of the "little things" is more difficult than the conquest of the "big things", so there is much to learn. First, in verse one I see the reality of sins forgiven. God proclaims to Joshua, Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. This is the second time that God had spoken these words to Joshua. You might remember that the first time was in chapter one and verse nine. There, Joshua faced the fears of the unknown. Here God spoke tenderly to Joshua because he was facing the fear of failure, the fear of heartache, the fear of discouragement. Place yourself in Joshua's shoes. You have experienced the agony of defeat. You have experienced the rebuke of God for the sins of pride and the lack of prayer. You have participated in the burial of thirty-six innocent men and had shared in the public execution of the guilty. I believe the sin of Achan brought back too many memories to Joshua. He remembered the golden calf at Sinai. He remembered the open rebellion at Kadesh. He remembered the constant backsliding of Israel. Is it any wonder that he was full of fear and discouragement? How many more Achans would he find? Could he be certain that God would restore the people back into His fellowship? How many times does God receive backsliders back? Fear of failure is a great deterrent to progress. Someone has written that fear of failure is the father of failure. At times, when I am tempted to resign to the pressures of failure, I am drawn back to the life of one of my great heroes in American history. Perhaps it is because he and I share the same birthdate, that I have become a student of his life. But, here was a man who--failed at business not once but twice, was defeated for the legislature of his state twice, was defeated on five separate occasions in his bid to enter the United States Congress, and was even defeated as a vice-presidential candidate. And yet, in 1860, Abraham Lincoln, never giving in to a fear of failure, was elected to the presidency in one of the most strategic moments in our history. His life reminds me that men who try something and fail are infinitely better than those who try nothing and succeed.

HOW COMPLETE IS GOD'S FORGIVENESS? Joshua 8:1

In my twenty-eight years of Christian ministry, twenty-six of those years being in a pastoral role, I found that the subject of God's forgiveness was one of the most difficult for us to grasp. Perhaps it is because we have a hard time giving and receiving forgiveness ourselves. But I discovered that here was an area, which instead of bringing victory, often brought a crushing defeat. And I knew that Satan was at work twisting and distorting the Word of God to bring discouragement into the lives of God's people. Today, I would like to share with you the fruits of my study of God's Word with regard to the matters of His forgiveness. One of the most troubling areas concerns the fact of recurring sin. How many of you have said, like I have said, "This sin is the same one that I committed yesterday, and last week and last month and last year." We begin to even consider that God is nothing more than a garbage dump upon which we can deposit our trash. Do we take advantage of God? Remember that great verse in 1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The key word, when it comes to matters of recurring sin, is just. Why is the Father just? When we sin, what do we have between us and the Father? (This is the truth the Devil does not want us to remember). The Father is just because we have a Mediator, an attorney, if you will, who tells God not to lay the sin to our charge. So, when God looks down, what does He see? The answer is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21 which states, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Jesus, in fact says, "Father, this is one of Your children. See, he is covered with My righteousness." I am reminded of the following true story. A Scottish physician, noted for his skill and also for his piety, died. When his books were examined, it was discovered that several accounts had written across them in red ink the words, "Forgiven, too poor to pay." His wife who was also Scottish, but who had less piety, felt differently about the unpaid bills. She said, "These bills must be paid," and proceeded to sue for the money. The judge examined the accounts and turning to the departed physician's wife, inquired, "Is this handwriting in red ink that of your husband?" She replied in the affirmative. "Then," said he, "there is no tribunal in the land that can obtain the money in the case of any account on which he has written the "Forgiven." Village Line friends, what a great and significant truth. We are covered by the blood of the Lord Jesus. And, we have Him as our great Mediator. But, let me give a caution here. The reality of this truth should not give us the license to do as we please just because we are covered with the blood of the Lamb. Paul, in Romans 6, reminds us that we are to live a life totally

dedicated to Christ and not to yield to the desires of the flesh. But, dear friend, don't become discouraged when you commit the same sin over again. God is simply reminding you that this is an area of your life which has not been totally surrendered to Him. In His grace, He is waiting for you.

MORE GOOD NEWS ABOUT GOD'S FORGIVENESS Joshua 8:1

You remember, in our last study, that our thoughts were directed toward those sins which we have called the recurring sins, you know, those which we are prone to commit over again. And yet, we discovered, in 1 John 1:9, the truth that God is a just God. He will forgive us because He sees us covered with the blood of His Son, who just happens to be our Mediator, our Attorney. But, I have found that there is a second area of sin of which Satan loves to remind us in order to bring the discouragement of failure into our lives. That is those sins which we cannot remember. Are those sins ever forgiven by God? Again, let us return to 1 John 1:9. There, John admonishes us to confess our sins, that is those sins of which the Holy Spirit has made us aware. The Holy Spirit gives us knowledge of sin. We are utterly dependent upon God to make us aware of those sins that need to be confessed. Not one of us has ever convicted ourselves of sin. Instead we rationalize and even make excuses for our sins. The Holy Spirit tells us the truth about our condition in the eyes of the Father. So, I pray to God, when my spirit is convicted by the Holy Spirit, and confess those sins to God. But what about those sins which I cannot remember, and I am sure that they are many. Well, what does 1 John 1:9 tell us: That God will forgive us all our sin; there is no balance of sin left after He has forgiven us. After confessions, we are as clean as Christ. There is an old philosophical syllogism which states: First, we are as clean as the one who cleanses us; second, Christ cleanses us; third, therefore we are as clean as He is. My Mother had scrupulous standards of cleanliness. She believed that cleanliness was next to godliness, so she scrubbed us pink to make us saints. I can remember her cleaning my ears. I thought she was looking for gold. But when she was finished, I was clean by her standards. So it is with God. We have to be that clean because God doesn't grade on a curve. God has only one standard and only one person has ever made it. That was the whole purpose of Christ becoming man, that we, whose righteousness was as filthy rags, might be brought into fellowship with a holy God. Finally, what about those sins of the past, which we know are forgiven, but whose memories still haunt us? What has God done with our sins? Let me share with you three verses which have encouraged my heart in this matter. The first is Psalm 103:12, which states, As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Now, friends, I have no idea at all where this place is, but it is there that God has dumped our sins. And as one dear saint told me, He has placed a no fishing sign there. The second verse is Isaiah 38:17, which states, You have cast all my sins behind Your back. This truth becomes more real because I have never found a verse in the Bible that states that God ever turns around to see what is behind Him. We could say that with our sins, out of sight is out of mind. The third verse is Isaiah 43:25, which states, I am the one who wipes out your transgression for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Cannot get more honest than that. So, if God has forgotten about our sins, who brings them to our minds? You are right, it is the devil. Our prayer, when those troubling thoughts of past forgiven sins come to our minds, should be that we might resist the devil so that he would flee from us.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS FROM THE JOSHUA 8:1

Joshua 8:1 Well, Village Line friends, we have spent considerable time reflecting upon God's command to Joshua to not be afraid or to be discouraged because of the failures of the past. God is a God of forgiveness, and when He forgives, we must go forward. But, you might remember that I shared with you that I had found three truths in this great verse. The first, as we have seen all week, is that we do not need to become discouraged. The second truth is found in those words, Take the whole army with you....Joshua and Israel had to learn that it was costly to leave the path of blessing. Now, instead of a few being involved, all were required. To backslide is costly. The longer people stay off the path, the harder it is to get back on. I liken it to getting off an exercise program; once off, it is so very difficult to resume once again. Now you might be asking me, just what is backsliding? I define it to simply live in disobedience to God; to live our lives the way we want to live; to not be willing to pay the price to fully follow Christ. It is a lack of commitment, an apathetic attitude. Let me share an illustration which I think captures the reality of backsliding. A notorious gambler came to the altar during a revival meeting. After the meeting, the minister told him to bring all of his gambling equipment to the next meeting and build a fire with them. "You'll have to excuse me, preacher, but I just can't do that." "Why not?" inquired the minister. "You've been converted, haven't you?" "Sure, I'm converted," said the gambler, "but that don't make me foolish. Suppose I throw all that stuff away and then I backslide; that would leave me in a fine predicament, wouldn't it?" Backsliding is when we say, "Lord, I want to be a Christian, just not a committed one." Because Israel had chosen to backslide into disobedience, it would now take all of the people in order for the nation to get back onto the right road. Finally, we read in verse 1, go up and attack Ai. Here was God's command to regroup for the battle at hand. Get back into the fight. Don't quit because of a setback. Don't quit because you yielded to sin. Remember God has promised you the victory. Let me close today's chat with some precious words from Jeremiah's pen. He writes, "Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land - against the kings of Judah and its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you, but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 1:18-19). Friends, there will be problems and trials, but they will not overcome us. There will be setbacks into sin, but we can choose to not let sin defeat us.

A RENEWAL OF A COMMITMENT TO GOD Joshua 8:30-35

I praise God for the eternal truths which He has been teaching us. Oh the depths of God's truths. And oh the victories we can experience when we walk in the fullness of those truths. We can be like Israel in their great victory over Ai. What an awareness of the presence of God with them and of their need to daily draw upon His strength. This great chapter closes with a time of renewal. One of the final commands of Moses, given to us in Deuteronomy, was the setting up of an altar on Mount Ebal after Israel had crossed the Jordan. Moses did not specify how soon, after the crossing of the Jordan, the altar should be set up, but the spirit of the command declared that there should be no delay. After the conquest of Ai, the heartland of the Promised Land was now open to Israel. Joshua could have reasoned that more conquests were needed before going the two days journey north to build the altar on Mount Ebal. It was dangerous to take this twenty to thirty mile journey into the heart of enemy territory. But, before they could proceed with the conquests and the settlement of the lands, there needed to be a renewal of their covenant with God. They needed the affirmation of their relationship to Him. They needed reminded of the One they were indeed serving. They needed a recommitment to the Word of God. Yes, there had been a recommitment to the covenant with God at Gilgal, but that was not enough. There needed to be a recommitment to obeying all of God's laws. Many times, in our own ministries, we can so easily get caught up in our work that we fail to take the time to renew our hearts before God. Our busyness in ministry, or in our profession, or in our recreation, or in our family time, prevents us from enjoying fellowship with the One who has called us to serve Him with all of our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our strength. As an individual, I need those moments everyday of quiet reflection. And I also need those moments every week, of corporate worship. Each is so important if I am going to be effective for the Lord. Renewal of the covenant is something each one of us should take more seriously.

A SUMMIT STRATEGY AGAINST GOD Joshua 9:1-2

We begin another study into the exciting book of Joshua. God has been at work doing some incredible miracles among the people of God. And these facts have not gone unnoticed by the pagan Canaanites in the surrounding countryside. Friends, God never does His work in secret. Neither should you and I. Jesus admonished us that we were to be lights in the world and that we were not to let anything hide the influence of our light. So, with the threat of the Israelites becoming more of a reality, the Canaanite nations gather together for a summit. The topic of discussion: How to conquer Israel? Yes, they all recognized that Israel was a threat to their existence. Yet they had a reason for some measure of optimism. Israel had suffered a defeat at Ai. They reasoned that had occurred because the Israelites were outnumbered. So, if they could just band their forces together, then victory might be assured. Now there is a lesson in these two brief verses. These pagan Canaanite leaders had to make a decision concerning God. These people had a knowledge about God. They had observed His incredible acts. The miraculous crossing of the Jordan River by the people of God, the stunning victory at Jericho, and the crushing defeat of Ai after a momentary setback, were topics of discussion around the Canaanite summit table. Certainly these people were faced with a decision: to submit to God or to resist Him. In a way, they were in a similar situation as was Pharaoh in the book of Exodus. Yet we remember his response, Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh had a choice and said "no" to God. I am also reminded of the words of Paul in Romans 1, as he portrays the actions of the world. He states that the world knew about God, but refused to honor Him. They were not thankful for God's goodnesses to them. They began speculating foolishly and their minds became senseless and darkened because any refusal to accept the truth will lead to the inability to distinguish between good and evil. These people thought they were wise, but in reality they were very foolish because they worshipped idols instead of the living God. They knew God, but resisted Him. So many people are like these Canaanite leaders. They so easily turn their back upon God and trust in their own merits toward salvation. How dangerous it is to refuse to submit to God. As we shall see, in our study in chapter ten later this week, the decision of these leaders to trust themselves rather than to submit to God, would be a fatal one.

THE PERIL OF DECEIT Joshua 9:3-15

Satan is a very subtle enemy. If he cannot defeat you using the direct method of attack, he will use the indirect method of deceit. He will come as the wolf in sheep's clothing. He will come as the angel of light bringing the message of darkness. In our last study together, we had observed the summit meeting of the Canaanite leaders as they began to strategize and make plans for dealing with the people of God. Included in that summit were the leaders of the community of Gibeon. But, as the plans began to unfold, these leaders became uncomfortable. They had reached the conclusion that fighting was not the answer, so they withdrew from the alliance and formed their own strategy. They hastily prepared and sent a delegation to Joshua asking for the terms of peace. Now they realized that the only way that they could gain an audience with Israel's military leader, was to deceive him into thinking they were something they were not. So they created the impression that they had come from a far country to make a covenant of peace with Israel. Dry, stale bread and cracked and dried wineskins were given to the delegation. They were not to mention Jericho or Ai in their negotiations. So they came to Joshua, presented their story, and the covenant of peace was signed. Now there are two lessons for us in this story. First, we must be careful that we not be deceived by those who quote the Word of God out of context. The leaders of Gibeon knew that God had permitted Israel to sign covenants of peace with those people who lived outside of the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 20:10-12). Yet they failed to quote God's warnings that Israel not sign any agreement with the nations living within the land (Exodus 23:31-33). Friends, Satan knows his Bible well. In fact, I believe he has it all memorized and he will use

it against you. Remember how he used the Scriptures in the temptations of our Lord. We are to test everyone who comes to us quoting the Bible. I am reminded of the admonition of the Apostle John when he wrote: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). In order to guard against this misuse of Scripture by our adversary, we must do two things. First, we must study it carefully. Many of you have taken classes here at the Village Schools. Our purpose is to help you to study carefully the Word of God so that you will know its truths and not be deceived by Satan. Second, we must let the Bible speak for itself. We should never come to the Bible seeking to prove our own presuppositions. But we must let God speak to us through His Word. The second lesson is that we can be deceived by using circumstances to interpret the Scriptures rather than evaluating our circumstances in the light of Scripture. Everything seemed so right to Joshua. The Gibeonites seemed so honest and sincere. But the circumstances were wrong. And tomorrow we will discover the serious mistake which Joshua made. Join us then, will you?

THE DANGERS OF A LACK OF PRAYER Joshua 9:14

Verse 14 contains one of those powerful truth statements. But they (meaning Joshua and the leaders of Israel) did not inquire of the Lord. They should have asked God for His guidance into this matter with those who were seeking to enter into a covenant of peace with them. Joshua should have prayed about it. Joshua should have remembered what had happened after the victory at Jericho when he failed to consult God before sending his army to defeat at Ai. Without the counsel of God, the Israelites were blinded to the fabricated story the Gibeonites had told them. Their story had seemed so authentic, at least the props seemed so. Once again, Joshua is caught up in the excitement of the moment. Once again he fails to consult God. So, once again, Israel is faced with a crisis. How easy it is, after great victories, to rely upon our own strength and counsel instead of upon God. How often do I say, "Oh, I know the answer to this problem. I don't need to bother God about this one." Or, I will say, "I believe I can handle this small crisis. God has other, more important matters to take care of." And, what made this situation all the more critical and dangerous for Joshua and Israel was the fact that these people came quoting Scripture to them as we saw in our last study. I reminded of the sad story of an unnamed prophet who was sent by God to declare God's judgments upon the evil king of Israel named Jeroboam. The prophet went to Bethel, delivered his message, and started home as he had been told, for God had commanded him not to eat or to drink while he was in the Northern Kingdom. Yet, a false prophet deceived him with a supposed message from God. The unnamed prophet took a meal at this man's house and later perished because of his disobedience. If only he had prayed before he took that fateful journey he would have known that the invitation came from the lips of a deceitful prophet. I need to be daily reminded of the importance of prayer. I need to be daily reminded that it is not my will but God's which is to be done. I need to be reminded daily that it is only through my prayer communion with God that I can come to know the truth of my situation and of God's desires for me at that moment.

A THRILLING VICTORY Joshua 10

Friends, have you ever had a decision which you made come back to haunt you later? If you have, then you know how Joshua and the people of Israel must have felt when they were informed by the leaders of Gibeon that they were under attack by the Canaanite armies and that, because of the covenant of peace which they had just signed, Israel had a responsibility to come to their rescue. Uh, oh! Now Joshua knew that he had made a serious mistake. But a promise was a promise and Joshua knew that he had to honor that treaty which he had signed. Yes, he had been deceived by these people. But, he had not consulted God before pledging the military forces of God's people to these people should they need it. One thing which I have always recognized as a strength in Joshua is his belief that two wrongs do not make a right. He could have said, "Too bad, Gibeon. I signed that treaty under false pretenses because you tricked me. That makes it null and void. You are on your own. Good luck." The world might even have said that Joshua was justified in responding in a manner like that. But, is that what God would want. Or, to use the modern question: What would Jesus do? Well, Joshua knew what God wanted done. The people of Israel represented God to the nations surrounding them. Any disavowal of the treaty now would cast aspersions upon the character of God. So, Joshua gathered his leaders and prepared to defend the city of Gibeon. And, I believe, God honored that decision by not only giving Israel an outstanding victory, but also allowing them to share in one of the most incredible miracles in all of Scripture: the standing still of the sun and the moon. What excitement for Israel! Everywhere they went they experienced the thrills of victory. No city, no matter how fortified, and no king, no matter how powerful, were able to stand against them. Why this series of victories recorded for us in this chapter. The text tells us it was because Israel was completely obedient unto the Lord. Obedience is such a simple little word. We all know what it means. But for many of us it is such a difficult word to model. For when we obey we are submitting ourselves to another. We are voluntarily surrendering the control of our lives to someone else. It makes no difference whether it is a child to a parent, an employee to his employer, or a believer to God, it is soon discovered that the only way to achieve success is through obedience. God was pleased to bless Israel with victory after victory because they obeyed. And, if we obey His word and seek to live according to His will, He will do the same for us.

MORE BATTLES TO FIGHT Joshua 11

It must have seemed to Joshua and the armies of Israel, that there was no end to the battles which had to be fought before the land

was conquered. First, there had been Jericho, followed by Ai. Then it was the battle at Gibeon, followed by victories at Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir (all recorded for us in chapter ten). I believe that one of the greatest temptations for Joshua and his troops was to relax and to enjoy the fruits of the Promised Land before the enemy had been entirely defeated. They had been fighting for quite some time, and I am sure, after the great victories which they had just experienced in southern Canaan, that someone did not say something like this, "Let's quit all this battle stuff and let's settle down and enjoy ourselves for awhile. We deserve some rest and relaxation." Oh the dangers when we relax when God says we should be fighting. Oh the dangers when we engage in compromise when God says we should be engaged in conflict. Now, Joshua became aware of a coalition of forces which threatened them from the northern regions of the Promised Land. This would not be an easy task because Joshua and his forces would be greatly outnumbered. But, they also remembered that God was on their side. And, although the numbers were against them there at the waters of Merom, Joshua and his army were nevertheless successful. It was because the Lord was fighting for them. God is never the author of defeat. God has never known defeat. Paul assured the Romans that what Joshua had proven centuries previously was still true: Since God is for us, who can stand against us? No one in Canaan and no one in our lives either. Now these victories did not come automatically. They came only as Joshua was obedient to the will and plan of God. Like Joshua of old, I can be more than a conqueror if I fully obey the Lord. Finally, verse 23 records that the land had rest from war. What a great thought - rest from battle. The Lord knows how weary the battle can become so He planned for a time of rest for Israel. The land was not totally conquered yet, but the big battles were over. So it is in my life. God provides that time of "rest from battle." Oh, I still know that there are enemies to fight, but I praise God for those times of retreat from the battlefield. There my soul is refreshed in the Lord and I am ready for new battles and new victories.

IT TAKES TIME TO SOLVE SOME PROBLEMS Joshua 12

As we begin another study in the Book of Joshua, our attention will turn from wars and fightings to the settlement of the land. God did not want the people just to conquer the nations which had inhabited the Promised Land; He wanted His people to make this land their home, to live in it, to raise their families in it, to make their livelihood from the land. This was the land which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob centuries before. Now it was to become a reality. This chapter summarizes the various kingdom-states which had been conquered by Joshua and the people of Israel. They numbered thirty-three in all. We have no exact biblical record as to how long this whole process of conquest took, but many Bible scholars have estimated that it could have taken as much as twelve to sixteen years. Yet this chapter is a record of God's faithfulness to His promises made to Israel and of Israel's obedience to the will of God. One by one the great kings and cities of Canaan fell before God and Israel. It was a long process, but in God's time the land was conquered. So it is with our problems. We may not resolve all of them immediately. In fact, haven't you found as I have, that most of our problems take time to resolve. I find that my greatest danger is in losing heart in the process. You see, I am one of those people whose patience is very thin. I want instant resolutions. The resolution of everyday problems is very similar to Israel's conquering of the Promised Land. Each day that Israel followed carefully God's plan, they came closer to conquering that city or that king. And, after many years of carefully following God's plans, the list of thirty-three kings and cities was completed. The king of Jericho - one; the king of Ai - one; the king of Jerusalem - one, etc. If I am going to experience victories over my problems, I, too, must carefully follow those instructions which have been given to me within God's Word. Soon I can then add the name of that particular problem to the list of those which God has given victory over: the king of pride - one; the king of sibling rivalry - one; the king of hatred - one; the king of impatience - one. And the list can go on and on.

AN INHERITANCE Joshua 13

I suppose it is the secret dream of most people to receive a sizable inheritance from a family member. We have a fascination in those stories which we read of a person who inherits a great deal of money from a Great Uncle Harry whom he has never known. The central feature of Joshua 13 is that of receiving an inheritance. In fact, this will be the theme for most of the remaining chapters of this great book. I would like to have us notice two truths which God has shown me from this particular chapter. First, I read in verse 14 these words: But to the tribe of Levi he (that is Joshua) gave no inheritance, since the offerings made by fire to the Lord, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as he promised them. The tribe of Levi received no inheritance because the Lord was their inheritance. I wonder how satisfying that was to them. All around, their friends in the other tribes were receiving estates. They were securing properties which had their names on them. But, as Levites, they were not receiving any lands. They were not obtaining any estates. They were told that their inheritance was the Lord. It is difficult for those who are in many ministries today to see their peers in other professions advancing in the material things of this world. It is especially hard for their children. I remember my college days when I knew several students who had grown up on the mission fields around the world and who had not had the material things many of the rest of us did. They really struggled with feelings of discouragement over this fact. And yet, their inheritance is the Lord. I believe that there are blessings which are given specially to those who have sacrificed the things of this world to proclaim the gospel of Christ. One only has to think of the great pioneering missionary statesmen, like William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and David Livingstone, who gave up the security of vocation for the cause of Christ. In a very real way, their inheritance, their legacy is dependent upon God. I see a second truth within this chapter. It is reflected in the desires of the two and a half tribes to receive their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan River. Now friends, that land was never given by God to Abraham. It was not part of the

Promised Land. Yet, these people were willing to settle for God's second best because it was a place of convenience and ease. The battles had been won there already. Yet, as one studies the history of these tribes, they suffered one defeat after another because they were living outside the boundaries of God's inheritance, because they had settled for God's second best. Sadly, I must admit, I am afraid that on occasion, I also have settled for God's second best because it seemed to be the easier road at the time. God's second best is just that: it is His second best. How we must focus upon God's best...the Promised Land.

SECURING YOUR INHERITANCE Joshua 14

Perhaps there is no greater man of courage in the Bible than Caleb. He was a man of integrity and a man who held fast to his convictions even though being in the minority. We are first introduced to this outstanding man in the book of Numbers, chapters 13 and 14. Caleb was one of the twelve spies Moses had sent from Kadesh barnea into the Promised Land to see what it was like. Upon their return, Caleb joined with Joshua in giving a minority report. Yet, he never wavered from his commitment to God even in the face of overwhelming odds. I imagine that there must have been great pressure upon both Joshua and Caleb to compromise and to join with the majority. They might have reasoned among themselves that so many people could not all be wrong. But Caleb was not afraid to claim the promises of God in the face of opposition. In fact, there is an interesting observation which comes from Numbers 13 and verse 30. We might have assumed that it had been Joshua who was the vocal one, taking the stand for God's will. But it was Caleb. Caleb was the more bold and courageous one. He was more willing to face difficult situations head on. Remember the number of occasions we have seen already in this book of Joshua where God has commanded his servant to not be afraid. Those words were never said to Caleb. Now, being eighty-five years of age and have endured the hardships of the wilderness and those years of conquest, Caleb is ready for his inheritance. We might think that, at his age, he would desire a portion of the land already taken. But not Caleb. He was never a man who desired that which was easy. So Hebron, the land of the giants, was his choice. But wait a minute, there was also something else about this place called Hebron which attracted Caleb. This was the place where Abraham had pitched his tent. This was the place where God had spoken face to face with Abraham and had promised this very land to Abraham and his descendants. Hebron was the place of communion and intimate fellowship with God. And I believe this is what Caleb aspired to for those forty-five years of wandering and conquest. The answer as to what motivated Caleb is found in verse 12: he was confident of the Lord's help. Caleb knew that he was incapable of defeating the giants in his own strength. But, he also knew that with God all things were possible. How we need to learn the lessons of Caleb. We often try so hard to work through difficulties in our own strength. Yet, seldom do we succeed. Paul reminded us that our ability to do anything is dependent upon the strength we get from the Lord. Caleb knew that and so should we.

LOOKING FOR THE EASY ROAD Joshua 17

In our last study we observed the confident assurance which Caleb had in God's presence and help in the conquest of Hebron. Chapters fifteen and sixteen of Joshua describe more allocations of the land to the various tribes, particularly to Judah and to Ephraim. There are two verses in these chapters which cause us to understand that all is not going well with the complete conquest of the land by the individual tribes. We read in Joshua 15:63 that Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites who were living in Jerusalem. And, in Joshua 16:10, the statement is made that the people of Ephraim could not dislodge the Canaanites who were living in Gezer. Although the latter served in slavery to the Ephraimites, the very continued existence of the Canaanites marked an area of disobedience on the part of Ephraim, for God had commanded each of the tribal groups to totally destroy those nations which inhabited the land. As I read those verses, I am reminded of my need for total obedience to the will of God. As one writer has put it: partial obedience to God is disobedience to God. Now, let us turn our attention to the inheritance which was given to that part of the tribe of Manasseh who had chosen to live on the west side of the Jordan River. After receiving their allotment, the tribal leaders go to Joshua and complain that they needed more land (see verse 14). Joshua agreed with them, but he did not go back and redistribute the lands already conquered. Instead, he told them to go into the surrounding forested hillsides and conquer the cities there (see verse 15). But the families of Manasseh replied that it would be too much work as the cities were well fortified. The task was too hard. Their attitude was "We can't do it!" And so, they did not proceed into the hill country even after Joshua reassured them that God would enable them to drive out the enemy. "I can't do it. We can't do it. It is too hard. We have not done it before." How many times do we respond to ministry opportunities with those words, the very same words which the leaders of Manasseh used with Joshua. Why are we always looking for the easy road? Why do we always want everything to be quick and simple? If anything of significance is to be accomplished for God, then it will take lots of work. But, as Joshua encouraged the families of Manasseh, so God encourages us. With His help and His promises, let us press forward to seize each opportunity for Him.

POSSESSING YOUR POSSESSIONS Joshua 18-19

As we have been discovering in our study through the book of Joshua, the theme has been declared so many times and in so many ways that we are to claim by faith the possessions which are ours because we are children of God. Israel has now been in the land and should have been ready to settle down in their inheritance from the Lord. As soon as the order comes down from God to begin to occupy, the tribe of Judah, being the largest begins to occupy the territory which was promised to them. Then, the second largest tribe, Ephraim, claims its territory. Even the two and a half tribes return to their inheritance across the Jordan River. But all is not well.

Behold, there are seven tribes which just are not sure yet what they want nor where they belong. There seems to be some apprehension on their part in claiming their possessions. This was very disconcerting to Joshua. So, he assembled their leaders and inquired as to why they were delayed in taking possession of the lands yet to be conquered. Oh the folly of a half-completed task. How often do we stop a ministry before it is completed. The reasons (excuses) are many: the task is too large; we are too tired; all of our enthusiasm is gone; our vision is clouded. Joshua challenged the leadership of these tribes to complete the task. So, too, we need to be encouraged today to complete those opportunities which God has given to us. I am reminded of that great promise given to us by the Apostle Paul in the book of Philippians. There he wrote: being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

CITIES OF REFUGE Joshua 20

We begin today by examining a concept which God had given to Israel but which is very foreign to us. I am speaking with regard to the six cities of refuge which are described in Joshua 20. The cities of refuge, three located on the east side of the Jordan River and three on the west side, were designated havens or safe places for those who had taken another person's life accidentally. They would always carry within themselves the guilt pangs associated with the accident. There would be those flashback episodes, those thoughts of "if I could do it over again." But within the walls of those cities they would not have to live in fear of the revenge from the family members of the deceased. Because God looks upon the heart, He knows the motivations for our every action. And because He knows those motivations He can provide a shelter of protection when we are falsely accused. Many times I return to that powerful truth recorded for us in Proverbs 18:10, The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous (that is you and me) run into it and they are saved. But these cities of refuge also remind me of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only place where I can go to find forgiveness and to be set free from my sin. He is my great High Priest. He is my refuge. Remember these words of encouragement from the psalmist: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1). I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust" (Psalm 91:2). Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies; I take refuge in Thee (Psalm 143:9). One of my favorite texts describing our safety in God is Deuteronomy 33:27 which reads, The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. The cities of refuge picture a person who has killed someone. "Where shall I go? How shall I escape?" are the cries from that person's lips. But is this not the picture of a person when he sees himself as a sinner. Remember Isaiah's words when he saw the living God, Woe is me, for I am ruined! (Isaiah 6:5). We are like that Philippian jailer when confronted by God, "What must I do to be saved?" Friends, we need to be ever pointing people to Jesus. Tradition states that once a year people were sent out in Israel to repair the roads and to clear the stones and to see to it that the signs were legible that pointed to the cities of refuge. I wonder how clearly I am pointing people to Jesus? He is a city of refuge for all who will come unto Him.

AN ALTAR THAT ALMOST COST A WAR Joshua 22

Have you ever done anything out of a spirit of innocence and had it backfire on you? Or you did something and your motivations were called into question? Have you ever been misunderstood? If you ever have, and I am sure that if you are like me this has happened more often than we care to remember, then you can identify with the scene in this chapter. The big part of the conquest is now completed. Those two and a half tribes who had chosen their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan River now bid their leave from Joshua and the rest of Israel. They have completed their vows to help in the conquest of the land. Now it was time to return to their families who were living on the opposite side. As these men approached the Jordan River, they bent down and gathered some boulders and made an altar there on the banks of the River. This memorial altar nearly created a disaster for Israel. When the rest of Israel saw this altar of stones, the scenes at Peor (the adulterous affairs caused by Balaam) and at Achor (the thievery and cover-up of Achan) came to their minds. They remembered how God had judged the entire nation for these sins. And the leaders recognized their identity with these tribes who they believed were erring. They realized their responsibilities so as to avert the judgment of God. Their memories of the past encouraged them to tear down the altar of the present. Our memories do serve a purpose to help us to keep our lives focused on God. And we are responsible for the actions of our brothers. For this alertness, the leaders of Israel are to be commended. But these leaders of Israel acted with prudence rather than with anger. The easiest thing to have done would have been "to shoot first and to ask questions later," to have invaded Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh and to have destroyed them for suspected idolatry. But these leaders sought answers before sending in the army. They sought an explanation before giving condemnation. It seems today we are too eager to condemn. A brother or sister does something we don't like and we are quick to grab the stones to throw. We dismiss attempts to seek for answers and explanations until after the stoning has occurred. By then it is too late. How much more prudent to seek out our suspected erring brother or sister and to share with them. Doing so may eliminate many heartaches and a great deal of pain to the body. Yes, it does take more time, but it really is time well spent.

GOD WANTS TO BLESS YOU Joshua 23

In Psalm 40:5, David declares, Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with Thee; If I would declare and speak of them, they would be too numerous to count. In 1897, a man by the name of Johnson Oatman read this verse and then sat down and wrote the following words which have been sung by countless

Christians since. When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, Do not get discouraged thinking all is lost. Count your many blessings name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done. The more one studies Scripture, the more one becomes aware of the fact that God wants to bless us. God wants to bless you! God wants to bless me! What does the word "bless" really mean? According to the dictionary, it means "To wish good to, to make happy and successful." This word, which is used over 400 times in the Old Testament alone, has some interesting qualities associated with it. Let me share just a couple with you today. First, God is the one who possesses and dispenses all blessings. Listen to these words from Jacob as recorded in Genesis 49:25, From the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you with blessings of heaven above. All blessings are God's to give. Remember those words of the Doxology: Praise God from Whom all blessings flow. What a great biblical truth. Second, the first act of God upon man was to bless him. We read in Genesis 1:28, God blessed them and said to them, "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." God did not instruct man. God did not discipline man. It does not even say that God loved the man. But, God's very first act upon man was to bless him. God's potential is always for blessing. I get excited every time I read verse 14 of this chapter. Joshua has gathered his people around him to share with them the final thoughts from his heart. He knows that his days are soon over, and yet he has one final challenge for Israel. Listen to these great words: Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. In other words, Joshua was reminding the people that it was God's desire that His people be prosperous. He truly wanted to bless them. But, God did not just bless Israel. He has promised to bless us as well. Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). God's blessings are there for us. It is His desire. But how can a person become blessable? That will be our focus for our next study.

HOW TO BECOME BLESSABLE Joshua 23:15-16

Yesterday we began our study of Joshua 23. Our focus was upon the concept of blessing. We stated that according to the Scriptures, God is the One who possesses and dispenses all blessings, and that His very first act upon man, after his creation, was to bestow a blessing upon him. It truly is God's desire to bless each one of us. But how does a person receive God's blessings? I am reminded of a statement Dr. Warren Wiersbe made at a pastor's conference I attended many years ago. He stated that too often we pray for God's blessings when we should have prayed that we might become blessable. How does a person become blessable? I believe the answer is found in verses 15 and 16. Let's read those verses together: But just as every good promise of the Lord your God has come true, so the Lord will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you. These appear to be pretty harsh words from Joshua, hardly fitting for a farewell address we might add. Yet, Joshua understood that in order for a person to become blessable, he had to first become obedient to the will of God. And Joshua knew the history of these people. For them, as it usually is for us if we are truly honest with ourselves, it is always easier to disobey than to obey. It just seems that disobedience comes naturally. Have you ever read a book written by such an authority as Dr. James Dobson giving you instruction on how to teach your child to disobey? Of course not! Children don't need instruction in disobedience. What they do need instruction in is obedience. Friends, if we are going to experience the blessings of God, then we have to be a person that God can bless. That means that we must practice obedience before Him. I am reminded of the words of that great hymn we used to sing when I was growing up. The chorus went like this: Trust and obey for there's no other way, To be happy (might we use the word blessed) in Jesus, But to trust and obey. Are you blessable today? Are you walking in obedience to God? If you are, then be alert to the blessings of God which He will shower upon you today.

CHOICES Joshua 24

Today we arrive at the final study in our series from the book of Joshua. I trust that your heart has been challenged as mine has with the truths which God has brought to our minds. This closing chapter of Joshua relates Joshua's final challenge to Israel and then his death. Joshua was now 110 years of age. Perhaps, he is the final person in Israel who could remember the days of slavery in Egypt which had occurred over sixty years ago. Yes, he had seen God perform more miraculous things than even he could remember. Joshua's success was based upon his being faithful to God. He had truly heeded those words given to him before he had led Israel across the Jordan River. Perhaps, among the most well known words of Joshua, are these, recorded in verse 15 of this closing chapter. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods you forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. Wow! What a testimony! Joshua knew that choices are an inevitable part of life. Everyday you and I make countless choices: what to eat and what to wear, which report to work on first at work, what classes to attend or not to attend, to drive carefully or recklessly, and the list goes on and on. Some choices we almost make unconsciously, while others are pondered and prayed over carefully. But the greatest choice that I can ever make on a daily basis is that of serving the Lord. Although it is God's desire for me to serve Him, He never forces that upon me. It was the Apostle Paul who wrote that we can either

yield our bodies to serve sin or to serve unrighteousness (see Romans 6). And the decision I made yesterday has little weight on the decision I make today. Each day must be a new surrendering to God. Each day must be a new conscious choice to walk with Him. Father, I want to thank You for these weeks of study which I have been privileged to share with so many through the Village Line. You have challenged us with many truths, like the one today on making choices. How we pray for Your wisdom to be given to us so that we might choose wisely. Give us courage to choose the right instead of the easy. Give us discipline to choose daily instead of procrastinating. May we say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Thank You for Your blessings. We give You all the praise and glory through Jesus Christ. Amen.