

Joshua Sermons-Joshua 1-6-Wayne Barber

Joshua
Commentaries

Joshua 7-24

JOSHUA SERMONS

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Joshua 1:1-5 Possessing What God Has Given

Okay, you say, "Wayne, what part of the New Testament are we going to go to next?" I want you to turn to the book of Joshua in the Old Testament. We're going to walk through this awesome book, the book of Joshua. We've been through Philippians, we've been all the way through Galatians, and we have learned about living grace. Saving grace is Christ saving us. He's the only way of salvation. Living grace is that Christ lives His life in and through us. That's what living grace is. Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship. And it's what we've been learning for quite awhile. Well, you say, "Wayne, why would you go to Joshua?" A big reason here. Matter of fact the message tonight is "Possessing What God Has Given." Possessing what God has given.

Several weeks ago, I preached a message on Jubilee to you, how Christ is our Jubilee. Of course, it just all so fits together. Jubilee occurred on the Jewish calendar every 50 years. Jubilee was the sound of freedom. It was a time when Israel could go back and possess what was already theirs. They didn't go back and get it, they already had it. But if they lost it during those 50 years, they could go back and possess it. Slaves were set free, possessions were reclaimed. It's in this spirit of possessing what is already ours, of experiencing what God has already given to us that we enter the study of Joshua. It's important in our study of Joshua that we understand that the nation of Israel, now under the leadership of Joshua as you'll see in just a moment, was about to go back into the land that God had already given to them. They're going to possess what God had already given to them; what was already theirs. For 430 years they had been out of their land. As a matter of fact, when Abraham finally got to that land, and in Genesis 15, God gave him a promise; a prophecy and a promise. You see this in Genesis 15:13, "God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed 400 years.'"

Now, He was giving him a prophecy way out in the future. A lot of history had to take place for that prophecy to come true. Abraham and Sarah had Isaac when they were of old age. As a matter of fact, he was 100 and she was 90. Hebrews 11 said that God miraculously gave her the ability to bear children even after that time was passed. Isaac was the father of Jacob and Esau. They were fraternal twins. Jacob as you know was the younger of the twins, the last born. But it was Jacob who would receive the blessing, and it was Jacob whose name would be changed to Israel. And Israel had 12 sons, and this became the 12 tribes of Israel. Of these 12 sons, one of those sons was a favorite of Jacob, or now Israel. In the 36th chapter of Genesis he gave Joseph a multi-colored tunic. And you know the problem if you know the Old Testament and the story there. This made all the brothers furious. So much so that they sold him into slavery to a group of Ishmaelites who were on their way to Egypt to sell their wares.

Years later—now here he is in Egypt—years later, there was a famine in the land of Canaan. The brothers had long forgotten Joseph, thinking him to be dead. And as a reason of the famine in Canaan, they had to go over to Egypt to buy grain to be able to survive the famine. Joseph, in the meantime, after a very painful experience of being falsely accused, of being thrown into prison, had gained favor with the Pharaoh. In fact, he was the second in command to all of Egypt, unbeknownst to his brothers, who were coming over to buy grain. The story is a beautiful one; the whole family being reunited through this famine in Egypt.

Well, the whole family moves over into Egypt, and they're there, settled in Egypt for over 30 years. They had great favor with the Pharaoh who was in power. But after that 30 year period of time, they had multiplied and multiplied and multiplied and a new Pharaoh came on the scene. And he was threatened by this group that was growing so rapidly, so he puts them into slavery, into captivity, for 400 years. Just like God said to Abraham back in the 15th chapter of Genesis.

And of course you know the story of Moses, those of you who have been around the Bible a little bit. You know that Moses now comes on the scene, floated down the river in a basket and one of the daughters of Pharaoh took him in and he grew up in the palaces of Egypt. And Moses was the man that God had appointed to set His people free, to take them out of Egypt and take them back into the land of which Abraham had been given. That land that they had been out of these 400 and some years. It is Moses who leads them out of Egypt—and I'm leaving a lot out of the story as you understand—through the Red Sea and through the

wilderness. And all the time, with all the victories they went through, it was Joshua who was right by his side, a servant, a helper to Moses. But in Deuteronomy Moses dies. He's not allowed to go over into the Promised Land. He's not able to go over into the land of Canaan. So in Deuteronomy he dies. And this sets up our study in the book of Judges. It's time to go and claim what God has already given to them. It's time to possess what God had already given His people.

In order for us to relate to this wonderful book, we must realize that God has not given us a land, God has given us a life. We need to learn from Joshua, because God is the same yesterday, today and forever. We need to learn by the journey of Joshua and the Israelites as they moved into a land God had given them, we need to learn how to experience, how to possess what we already have in Christ Jesus. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I came that they might have [not land] life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Now look in the text with me at Joshua 1:1, as we begin to learn: How do you possess what you already have? Joshua 1:1. We begin with a change of leadership. "Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' servant." Now, "it came about after the death of Moses." Moses did a very smart thing under the direction of God. He'd done his homework. He had prepared the people for a new leader. Leaders change. They come, they go. And he had prepared them for a new leader. In Numbers 27:15-23 it says this, "Then Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, 'May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who will go out and come in before them. And who will lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.' So the Lord said to Moses, 'Take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. And have him stand before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. And you shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him.'"

Basically it was like an ordination; it was setting him apart. And they were beginning to understand that the power, the authority was going to shift to Joshua. We also see in Deuteronomy 31:1, of this happening: "So Moses went and spoke these words to all of Israel, and he said to them, 'I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to come and to go and the Lord has said to me, "You shall not cross this Jordan." It is the Lord your God who will cross ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the Lord has spoken. And the Lord will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land when He destroyed them. And the Lord will deliver them up before you and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you.' Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, 'Be strong and courageous for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. And the Lord is the One Who goes ahead of you. He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.'"

A wonderful picture of how Moses, directed by God, sets apart the leader that is to follow him. I don't know much about that in its fullest experience, but I have experienced something close to that. I pastored in one church for 18 years. It came time for me to go, and I knew it in my heart. I knew it in my heart. And so I recommended the next pastor. They asked me to stay as their interim. And for eight months I had the joy of preparing a church for a new leader. And on my last day, that was his first day. They walked through my line and say, "See you, Wayne," and they walked through his line and said, "Hello, John." And they never looked back. As a matter of fact, somebody said they were going to write that up as the smoothest transition they said that they believed they'd ever seen in that part of the world. God just did a beautiful thing. But He did the same thing with Moses and with Joshua. He'd already set the people up to understand Joshua is going to change to be your leader. The day had finally come for Joshua to take the people back in to the land God had given to them.

And so verse 1 says, "Now it came about after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses servant, saying." By the way, that little term there, "the servant of the Lord," when He talks about Moses, that's one of the most awesome things God could have done, it's the greatest compliment God could have bestowed on Moses. He was a servant of the Lord. I thought about this as I was studying. I want that to be on my tombstone someday. If God would so honor it. "He was a servant of the Lord." And then Joshua now has come on the scene.

The instructions God gives to Joshua are so awesome, to help you and I understand how to possess, how to experience what we already have in Christ Jesus. Three things I want you to see in verses 1-5 of Joshua 1.

God's Unchangeable Principles

First of all, I want you to see God's unchangeable principles. And there are many, but there are two particular ones that are found in this verse. It doesn't take long in verse 2 to begin to realize the principles that come to the service. Remember, the same principles that they inherited the land are the same principles as we inherit the life. It's exactly the same. "Moses, my servant, is dead," He says in verse 2. "Now therefore, arise and cross this Jordan."

Now the Jordan River stood between the nation of Israel and the land that God had promised to them. They had to cross that river. Now the challenge was great. Joshua 3:15 tells us that it was at flood stage. This is interesting. Every year at the harvest time, the spring harvest, it would flood. It says in 3:15, "And when those who carried the Ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priest carrying the Ark were dipped in the edge of the water," and then it pointedly says, "for the Jordan overflows all of its banks all the days of harvest." In that harvest time, after the snows in the high mountains in the winter time, the river was swollen, as that water had run off Mt. Lebanon, down into the Jordan River, and it was at flood stage. Some people have estimated as to how deep it was, but whatever it was, it was an insurmountable type of situation. But God chooses this particular time. He could have waited, but He doesn't. He chooses the flood season when it's out of its banks. He chooses that time to tell them to obey Him and go on over into the land. You say, "Wayne, what's the principle in all of that?" The principle is clear. It's interesting in life, back then, and life today, how God chooses to put us in a crisis situation—now listen—in order to make us desperate enough to trust Him so completely that we can enter and experience what we already have. God always has and always will work on the principle of desperation.

You see, I might be able to stand up here and say it in a really great way; "this is what you have in Christ. Look at all you have in Christ." We can do that, and that's fine. But saying it and living it are two different things. And for a person to experience the life, he's got to experience the death. He's got to experience his own dying to self, and when he's at the point when he doesn't know what to do, that's when he cries out and that's when he begins to be able to enter what he already has. "Moses My servant is dead, now therefore arise. Cross this Jordan," verse two says, "you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel."

God never gives us, this is the second, God never allow us to experience all that He's given to us at one time. Have you ever understood that in your Christian walk? He doesn't let you experience everything that is yours at once. And there's something in this that is so good. It's a step by step process. It's a walk. It is a journey, and the further you go, the more you begin to experience what He says has already been yours. There's no way to know how many people were in Israel at this time; some people say a million to a million and a half people. I don't know. I could not justify that. I just don't know. But there were a large number of them. So many that it threatened Pharaoh and it took quite a bit of time to get them out of Egypt.

But I want you to notice something here: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore rise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land—and watch this phrase—which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel." I want you to catch that phrase: "The land which I am giving to them." Now, I don't know about you, but when I study scripture things like that just stare out at me. I thought He'd already given it to them. "What do you mean 'I am giving it to them,' if He's already given it to them?" All the way back in Genesis 15, when God cut the covenant with Abraham, promising him a land and a nation, and a seed, He says in verse 18, "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying 'To your descendants—now listen—I have given this land.'" Not I am giving, not I'm going to give, I have given. When Moses was not allowed to enter the land, God said through him in Numbers 20:12, "But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'"

In Numbers 33:51, He says "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places and you shall take possession of the land and live in it for I have given the land to you to possess it.'" God has said it over and over again, "the land which I have given to you," but in our text He doesn't say that. He says, "You take them over into the land which I am giving to Israel." Do you notice what I am saying here? Has He given it or has He not given it? Why does He say "I am giving it" if He's already given it?

Well, what I want you to see is that what God has promised to all of us and to them, different from the covenant that we're in; He chooses not to let us experience it all at once. He enlarges our faith through the crisis experience He puts us into, and then the less there is of us, the more that we begin to experience of Him. But we had Him all along. We had Him all along. How many people I've heard stand up and share "this is what we have in Jesus. Shout, brother, shout." And then follow along like a fly on the wall for a week and see whether or not they're experiencing what they had, what they said they already know that they have. God has to bring us to that place of understanding that He doesn't give it to us all at once. And we'll see in the next point how that's helpful.

Dwight L. Moody, I think it was Dwight L. Moody or R.A. Torrey, I believe it was Moody; he grew and grew and grew in his walk with the Lord. His faith was enlarged daily as he sought to trust Him. And when he came down to the last part of his life, he made a statement one day. After having been in prayer and in the Word, he cried out, "Oh, God, please stop blessing me. I couldn't stand it if you blessed me anymore!" Now, I wonder why he didn't say that 30 years before. You see, the longer you walk with God and the more you trust God, the more you understand even though you have all of Him, you don't experience it all at one time. You experience it to the degree that you're able to trust Him and willing to trust Him in your life.

I love what Manley Beasley did. Manley Beasley walked into a hospital room one night. And if you know Manley, he's quite a character, and the lady said, "Manley, will you pray for my healing?" And Brother Manley said, "I don't know if I will or if I won't." You

had to know Manley to understand that. He said, "Before I do anything, though, would you tell me how you have experienced Christ in a way that's different from ever before in your life? Would you just share that with me?" And she began to share and the tears began to stream down her face, and for over a solid hour she talked about how she had never known God like she had known Him through this illness, from being desperate and trusting Him. And Brother Manley made the statement, "Are you sure you want me to pray that God will heal you and release you from the very thing that has brought you to experience what you said you already had?"

God's unchangeable principles. One of them is He'll put you in a crisis and that crisis is such that you're desperate and you'll cry out to Him and it's in crying out to Him that you begin to experience what He already has told you is yours. But it'll never be all at once. Our faith enlarges and as we grow we experience the depths of the One that we've had within us all along.

God's Unchangeable Plan

Secondly, not only do we have God's unchangeable principles, but we have God's unchangeable plan. And this is where it becomes very clear in Joshua 1:3. Joshua 1:2 really doesn't finish because you've got to go to verse 3. And in my Bible I'm so grateful that verse 3 always follows verse 2. It says in verse 3, "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses."

Now, "the sole of your foot" is a very significant term. It's the Hebrew word kaph. It refers to the inside of the hand, the tender part, or to the tender side of the foot. And very obviously here it has to refer to the foot because He said, "every place the sole of your foot treads upon." It's that tender part of the bare foot. You say, "Wayne, what in the world does that mean?" Well, think about it. When did they ever walk barefooted? When did God ever tell them to take their shoes off? When Moses was at the burning bush, Exodus 3, he was up on Mt. Sinai, or as some translations say Mt. Horeb, and God appeared to him in a burning bush. I'd like to have been a fly on the wall, wouldn't you? I would have loved to have been there when that bush was burning, but not being consumed. It was the fire in the Presence of God and God spoke through that fire and spoke to Moses. What did He tell him? He says, "'Do not come near here,' God said. 'Remove your sandals from your feet?'" Now why? "For the place on which you are standing is holy ground, ground that is set apart unto Me." "Do you understand, Moses, that you are in My Presence? Take your shoes off, son. Take your shoes off." The ground was holy. Take off your sandals, consider the ground holy. The term sole of your foot has to do with considering the ground holy before God.

Do you see where I'm headed here? Do you understand what He's saying here? "Joshua, every step you take and consider to be holy unto God, is yours. I've already given you the land, but every step you take in obedience to me, you walk into victory to me and you can claim that which I said was already yours. Every step you take in obedience to Me." That means a holy life. "God I trust you, I will obey you," and you walk in the fullness of what God says is already yours.

Joshua experiences this in his very first battle. They came to a city by the name of Jericho. In Joshua 5:3, it says this: "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and behold, a man was stand opposite him with a sword drawn in his hand. Joshua went to him and said, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?' And he said, 'No.'" In other words, you're asking the wrong question. I didn't come to take sides, I came to take over. He says, "'No, rather I indeed come now as the Captain of the Host of the Lord.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and bowed down and said to him, 'What has my Lord to say to His servant?' And the Captain of the Lord's Host said to Joshua [listen to me now], 'Remove your sandals from your feet for the place where you are standing is holy,' and Joshua did so."

You say, "Wayne, what's significance is that? What are you trying to say?" Listen, they were about to go into a battle with Jericho and God's ways are not our ways, God's will is different that our will. And He says, "Joshua, unless you're willing to bow before Me, you'll never understand what I'm about to tell you. I want the people to walk around the city one time every day for six days, and the seventh day, seven times around, and then blow that trumpet." And when they did, the power of God fell and the walls didn't just fall in, they fell the opposite way they're supposed to fall. I've been there and that's one of the main things they talk about, how they fell that was so unique, because God destroyed those walls.

You see, when you're saying yes to God and every step is holy, then you don't know what's next because only God is giving that. And every time you take a step in your Christian life and you say, "okay Lord," and "yes, Lord," you don't have to know where it's going, and it doesn't have to make all the sense in the world to you, but you're willing to say yes to God and that's the way. Faith is obedience. That's the way we walk in that which God says we already have. That's the way we claim and possess what God says is already ours.

What did Paul say in Galatians 2:20? "The life I now live I live [by what?] by faith." You can see it in the Old Testament. Every step that I take is holy unto God. I'm willing to say yes and walk in the fullness of the life that He says is mine in Christ. So the plan of God has never changed. It's never changed. Just as Joshua had to learn to obey God, to enter the land which was promised to him, we must learn to obey Him and to obey His Word. We've said it over and over again, and you already know this. And, by the way, it is situation by situation by situation. And little by little we begin to experience what God said is already ours.

God has integrity with everything He does. It's not frivolous and it's not cheap. It comes at the expense of our willingness to say yes to Him. And when we do, we consider the ground we're standing on to be holy. We consider it holy and we begin to enter what we say we already have. We begin to experience the fullness of what God says is ours. The unchangeable principles of God. He always puts us in a crisis experience and never allows us to experience it all at one time. And the integrity of it is the unchangeable plan of God; that it is only as we consider each step holy as unto God that we enter that which He has for us.

The Unchangeable Promise of God

In verse 4 He gives the boundaries of the land He promised Israel. "From river Euphrates eastward to the Mediterranean Sea westward was given to Israel." Because of their disobedience they never took all that God gave to them, but that's history. One day they will have it all, by the way, when He comes back and puts everything to rest. But there are two things that are going on here, and that's why I'm not dwelling on verse 4. That promise is not to us. There are two things; it's like a two-lane highway.

I was going down to do a meeting at a church in Dilley, Texas. It's south of San Antonio. Dilley, the only motel they had, had a sign on the door of each room, "No skinning of deer in the room." And I was deeply grateful that they put me in Pearsall, which was a little bit different. It's about 22 miles closer to San Antonio from there. They gave me a car to drive because they didn't want to come pick me up after every service. And so the first night I went down I just noticed as I walked out to the car, the license plate was out of date and from New Jersey. Now, I think what happened was there was a local car dealer that let me use the car, and I'm certain somewhere in that car was a legal plate. But the one I saw was still on the back of the car. Well, I got in that car every night very tentatively. I didn't know, what if a state trooper pulled me over? First of all, I wasn't real sure where Dilley was. Secondly, I don't know who it was that loaned me the car, and thirdly, I just look guilty. So I didn't know what was going to happen.

So I got in the car every night and I was doing two things. There were two lanes on that highway. I'm watching with one eye this lane, and I'm watching with the other eye this lane. I'm looking for the Smokey to come. Second night, sure enough, here he comes. And when he saw me he was just going regular, he just sped up and got me. Don't you hate it when a state trooper does that? And they get right up on me and you don't know what to do. He hasn't got any lights on, he hasn't made any signals, and he just keeps driving. Then he pulled over to my left. "Oh, thank you, God. He's going to pass me." But he didn't pass; he just stayed there, same speed. There were two things going on. Two lanes. In this lane I had a Smokey and I'm trying to figure out what he's going to do. In this lane I've got to get off at a certain exit to go to Dilley, Texas. Finally, when it got down to Dilley, he just looked over at me a couple of times and realizes I was too dumb to be too bad. I just pulled off and he right on going and I said, 'Thank you, God, thank you!'

But two things were going on, and two things are going on right here. You cannot get inside the life of Israel, how God's speaking to Israel, the promise He's giving to Israel. You cannot do that. However, there's an application of this that fits right into the New Testament. We've been studying it for a whole year in the book of Galatians. He's saying the same thing, the same thing in a different way. Two things are going on at the same time. So verse 4 you have to skip right on by, but verse 5, there is a promise He gives to them, and I promise you that the promise He gives to us, because He said He'll never leave us or forsake us. And our victory is always going to be in Him. Look what He says in verse 5, "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you or forsake you."

Now I want you to notice that "No man will be able to stand before you." I want you to understand what that's saying. It doesn't say he won't try to stand before you. The term won't be able to stand before you has the idea of being able to stop you, to take away from you something that God has given to you. And God said, "Listen, if you'll consider every step holy, if you'll take every step as unto Me, you're going to walk into a land that I said is yours, and I'm going to give it to you step by step as you walk into it. And as long as you'll walk that way, desperate for Me and obedient to Me, no man can take from you what I have given to you." When we walk by faith, when we yield to Christ and to His Word, no man can take from us what is ours in Christ. No man can take from us the joy of our hearts, nobody can take the peace from our hearts, nobody can take the beautiful fruit of the spirit that He promised to produce in us in Galatians 5:22-23. I hear so many people so often say "I just lost my joy," and I want to take them to the book of Joshua and I want to show them, "No sir, no man can take from you what God has given to you. What you did was forfeit it when you chose to do things your way instead of doing things God's way."

I want you to remember that. The days when there are no patience in your life, the days when there is no peace in your life, the days when there is no joy and no love and the things that God says is ours, when they're not there, nobody took them from us. "Well, Wayne, that person was mean to me." No sir, you had a choice and if you consider every step holy, no matter what the circumstances are, you walk in what is already yours in Christ Jesus. "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life, just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you or forsake you." To deepen the effect of the promise, God says to Joshua, "Just as I've been with Moses, I will be with you."

You've got to be a fly on the wall there to understand how Joshua took that. Wow! Joshua was there when he saw God do the victories through Moses. He was only a servant, but he was at the side of Moses. And He says, "Just like I was with him, I going to

be with you.” Joshua, having only been a servant to Moses for forty years, probably thought of himself just in that matter. He’s not as wise, he’s not as strong, he’s not powerful as Moses; but God makes it clear it wasn’t the wisdom of Moses, it wasn’t the strength of Moses, it was the fact that God was with Moses. And He says, “Joshua, I will also be with you. The wisdom comes from Me, and the strength comes from Me, Joshua, and like I gave it to Moses, I will give it to you.”

Leaders can change and they will change, but God never changes. And if a leader is willing to walk with God and a leader is willing to let Jesus be Jesus in his life, he walks in the fullness of everything God says is his. And no man, no man, can take away what God has given to His people. Joshua would be strong. Joshua would be wise, to the degree that he was willing to bow and say yes to God. To His Word and to His will. No man would be able to stop him, no man would be able to take from him what God had given to him.

Verse 5, “No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you or forsake you.” That word, “I will not fail you or forsake you,” has the idea “I will not drop you, and I will not abandon you. I will be with you, Joshua. I’ll not run away from you when you’re in trouble.”

When I first went to the church in Chattanooga, God began to do some great things. And all of a sudden—well, I’d never heard of a church of Satan, I’d never heard of that in my life. I didn’t know there was one. But evidently there are and they’re everywhere. It’s amazing that anybody would want to worship the very one who was cast out of heaven and is nothing more than a rebel and his judgment is sealed. But they do. We’d begun to get letters from them. And they were signed with blood, human blood, I guess, or animal blood, and it was a big splotch of blood on the bottom of them. For about six months I would get these letters. They would threaten to kill my family. They threatened to do all kinds of things, just very nasty and very cruel things they’d write. Most of the time they would spell my name wrong and I thought that was kind of comical.

But it was interesting how we just didn’t give it any attention at all. As a matter of fact, after awhile I started pinning the notes up on the bulletin board in the foyer, hoping somebody could recognize the handwriting. Then they started dispatching about 18 of them—they never came at one time, there were about three to five at one time—that would come to our services and sit in different spots all over our service. And while we were preaching and while we were singing and praising God, they would sit there and talk and pray to Satan that he would do all kinds of destructive things to us. One of the people finally came to me and said, “Wayne, aren’t you going to recognize this kind of stuff?” I said, “Listen, you recognize it, you dignify it. Why dignify anything like that? Why don’t we keep preaching Christ Who has the power over all of them?”

Well, unbeknownst to me, many of our people grabbed hold of that and they started finding them in the service and sitting around them. While I was preaching, they were there with their heads bowed, praying that God would thwart the power that they had, that He would shut it down. And after about three month’s period of time, never having said a word from the pulpit, never giving mention to it at all, they disappeared. And we never saw them for 15 more years.

It’s incredible. God said it. Didn’t He say that? No man can stand before you. “Well, Wayne, the devil’s a spirit.” Yes, but he has to inhabit the body of a man. No body, no spirit is left unclothed, 2 Corinthians 5 tells us. And so, any way you look at it, he’s not going to have any power over anything God is doing. As long as we walk in obedience to Christ and His Word, no man, no man, can stand in our way and stop what God wants to do in our midst.

God’s unchangeable principles.

I want us to understand this as we walk into 2004. I want us to understand that God’s going to put us in crisis, after crisis, after crisis, after crisis. Because only when we’re rendered to the point of desperation can we cry out and experience what we already know that we have. But God’s not going to let us experience it all at one time. It’s only to the degree we’re willing and the measure we’re willing to obey. And our faith will begin to enlarge, and as it enlarges we’ll begin to understand the depths of that which before will seem like shallow waters to what we have experienced.

God’s Unchangeable Promise

God’s unchangeable principles; not only that, but God’s unchangeable plan. Every place that the sole of your foot treads. That’s individual. That’s each one of us. As we learn to trust God in our own personal walk. But God’s unchangeable promise. No man, no man, can stand and take away what God says is rightfully ours in Him. You see, I want you to think about with me for a second as we close. Apply this to your life. Just apply it to your life. Are you right now frustrated with God because He hasn’t done something that you know in Scripture that He’s promised to do? Are you frustrated with Him? Are you impatient because you’ve done this and you’ve done that, and God hasn’t done what you thought He was going to do? Is the situation you’re in right now closing you up and are you getting to the point that you begin to feel like you’re at the end of your rope? From the Scripture do you realize that’s the greatest place you could be? Do you realize that this is God’s way of leading you into a place of desperation?

I’ve never thought of myself as a counselor; I try, and I work at it, but I’ve never really thought of myself. I’ve always had sort of the

attitude that it ought to be a counseling session, five minutes is probably long. Two minutes to tell me your problem, about 30 seconds to show you where it needs to be a change of lifestyle and learning to say yes to Christ, and then maybe two minutes to two and a half minutes to decide whether you're going to do that or not. And if you're going to do that, it's great cause I'm going fishing. I just always thought that was the way it was! I was the only staff member left on the property one day at a church. Everybody had gone home. I was there late and a man came in the door because some of the personnel had forgotten to lock it. It was about 6:30—people had been gone for awhile. He walked into me and he said, "Man, is there somebody here who can help me? Is there somebody here?" I said, "Well, I can try." "Well, who are you?" I said, "I'm the senior pastor." He said, "Oh, good." I'm thinking, "I don't think so."

Then he told me a story that was horrifying. I mean, it was just terrible things in his life, and he said, "I'm at the end of my rope. I'm at the point where I don't know what to do." And I said, "Well, praise God!" And he looked at me and he said, "Praise God? Is there anybody else around here that can help me?" And I said, "No, you're not listening to me. I'm not trying to be trite when it comes to your pain. But what I'm trying to tell you is God has finally backed you into a corner. What can you do right now to help yourself?" He said, "Nothing." I said, "Man! That's it! At the point of desperation is when you cry out to God; and when you cry out to God, that's when he's able to move in your life and that's the only time He's able to get the glory for what He's done."

See, that's what it's all about. Are you at that point in your life? Are you at the end of your rope? Has God driven you there? That's not a bad place. As a matter of fact, it's a wonderful place. Are you willing to obey God no matter what He says? Do you realize that no one can take from you what God has given to you, so even in the midst of your desperation, when you say yes, you can still walk in the joy He says is yours? You only give it away when you refuse to obey.

The book of Joshua is going to be an exciting journey as these Israelites, God's people, learn to possess what God has already given to them. And we're going to learn from them. How we walk in the life that God says is ours in Christ. But we can learn from each other.

Joshua 1:6-9

Be Strong and Take Courage

Turn with me to the book of Joshua. I hope you're enjoying this as much as I am. I tell you what, I haven't done the Old Testament in awhile. And it's just going to be a wonderful adventure in the book of Joshua.

Tonight we're going to look at Joshua 1: 6-9. "Be strong and take courage." Be strong and take courage. One of the greatest challenges in life for me, and I'm sure for you if you're trying to share it with others, is for believers to understand not only what is theirs in Christ, but how to appropriate what you have. You ever study one of those ATM machines? And you put your card in. You've got money in the bank—hopefully—and you put your card in to draw it out. It's your money. It's in the bank. You put the card in, you pull it out and you wait for the sign to come up. It's demonic! And it says, "Please punch in your personal identification code." And you can't remember it. Now, I just want to know, has this happened to anybody but me?

But you just stand there. You feel so stupid. You know, they tell you when you get that personal identification code. They say, "Put this in a place where nobody can get to it." And you did; now you can't even find it. What is yours is yours, but you somehow are not able to get to it. And that's what we're going to learn here in Joshua. In the book of Joshua, we're going to learn to appropriate what God has given to us as we study how they learned to appropriate what God had already given to them.

For 430 years they had been out of their land. God had promised them a land. He gave that promise to Abraham, but they'd been out of that land for 430 years. Thirty years in Egypt had been a peaceful time as the Pharaoh was in good sync with the people. But then something happened. They changed Pharaohs. And the new Pharaoh saw this vast multiplying group, and he began to be threatened by them. So he put them in captivity. And they lived in captivity for 400 years, exactly the way God said it to Abraham back in Genesis 15. Moses is dead now, they've come out of Egypt, they've crossed the Red Sea, they've come through the wilderness, and now it's time. It's time to enter the land which God had already given to them.

Now, again, we don't have a land, we have a life in Christ Jesus. But we need to learn how to possess this life. Even though, yes, we have it, let me put it this way: we need to learn how to experience the life that we already have in Christ Jesus. We learned last time in verses 1-5 some helpful things that as we go through life we can begin to better understand what's going on. We learned in verses 1-5 that God creates a crisis in our life in order to put us in a position to trust Him; to totally depend upon Him.

Now, I want to promise you this. We should be walking by faith. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. If we're willing to walk by faith, I want to promise you God will keep us at the point of desperation. You don't walk by faith until you live by desperation. You see, if everything is going well all the time, we're prone to drift; and when we drift we're not walking by faith, and God allows things to

come into our life to bring us back to that point to where we depend upon Him. God put Joshua in a crisis right away, just after Moses had died. He puts him right into a crisis. In verse 2, “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all the people to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.”

The Jordan River stood between them and the Promised Land; for them to possess the land, for them to enter the land they already had, they had to cross that Jordan River. But in 3:15 we saw the last time that the Jordan River was flooded. This was not the time to cross the river. This is the worst time it could be. Talk about a crisis! A flooded river. It was after the spring harvest and the snow had melted on Mt. Lebanon and had drained down to the river and the river was out of its banks. I mean, “Lord, don’t You understand? You don’t cross a river at flood stage.”

But God picked that time to tell them it was time to cross the river. God could have waited to another time, when the water was within its banks, but He didn’t. Now to relate to this, and hopefully you’ve made your drawing connecting some dots here. We must ask ourselves a question: What crisis am I in right now? What has God allowed to come into my life, has driven me to the point that I have no choice but to trust Him? What is God trying to teach me? What is it about Himself that He’s wanting me to experience? See, we don’t look at life that way. This is what causes us to enter what we have. We forget that life is all orchestrated. Some people say, “Is it His perfect will? Is it His permissive will?” I don’t know! I just know He’s in charge of it. That’s all I want to know, by the way. I don’t really care who wins the argument, I just want to know He’s in charge. When I’m in the midst of a valley, don’t come to me with whether or not it’s His perfect will or His permissive will! Hey, just let me be encouraged that He’s in control, and He’s doing something in my life. You see, God is in me and in you everything that we are not. And for us to experience Him we have to be at the end of ourselves, to where we’re desperate enough to cry out to Him.

But, not only does God create a crisis, but we also learned that God doesn’t let us experience all that we have at one time. He doesn’t let us do that. I just wish He would, but I’m not so sure we could stand it. On the Mount of Transfiguration, just a little bit of His glory seeped out, and it just overwhelmed the three apostles that were there. And He just gave them a peek. We don’t get to experience what He’s given us in Himself. He lets us enter a little bit at a time. He says in the end of verse 2: “You and all this people, I want you to take them across this Jordan to the land which I am giving to the sons of Israel.” It was theirs, but they could only enter it as they are willing to obey Him. Only to the degree that they were willing to walk by faith could they enter what they already had.

He says in verse 3: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you just as I spoke to Moses.” God just simply told Moses what He tells us in the New Testament, in the new covenant. He just simply says walk by faith. Walk by faith. Faith is trusting God; forsaking all, I trust Him. You walk yielded in surrender to Him. And if you’ll do that, then every step that you take, you begin to experience what you already had but didn’t even realize it. That’s the journey.

We also learned that no one can take from us what God has given to us. He says in verse 5, “No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you [these are beautiful words] or forsake you.” I won’t abandon you, I won’t drop you. I didn’t bring you this far to teach you how to swim to drown you. I’m going to be there to carry you through. What a beautiful promise. Be careful when, sometimes—and I’ve done it—in frustration you carelessly say: “I’ve just lost my joy.” No, you didn’t lose it; you chose to walk away from it. Because your joy is in a person: the Lord Jesus. And nobody can take that from you, nobody. I just wish sometime I could blame somebody. “It’s them, Lord!” And God says, “No it’s not, it’s you. You’ve chosen to take your focus off of me and you’ve disinherited yourself for this present moment, from that which you already have.” Well, be careful with what you say many times about people taking your joy or stealing it. No, no man can take from us what God has given to us.

With the groundwork laid for possessing what is ours today, we move now to verses 6-9. You’ve got to keep connecting these passages. This is not a brand new message based on Scripture that’s isolated from verses 1-5; it all connects. Let me read the passage for you if you want to read silently with me:

Joshua 1:6-9: “Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant, commanded you. Do not turn from it, to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Now the key to this whole message is found in the words “be strong, be courageous.” And you see it used three different times in three different verses. The word for “strong” is in a stem. They’re called stem in Hebrew and it means “be becoming strong,” be growing up, be growing strong. It’s not a onetime thing. It’s to be growing stronger and stronger and stronger and stronger. It’s the strength from within that He’s talking about here. It’s the strength from within that enables us to face whatever lies ahead of us. In

fact, the Greek word is so clear; that's why I love the Greek. The Hebrew is more conceptual. But the Greek is so precise. It is the word *ischus*, word that means "inherent strength; inward strength."

Have you ever been around someone like that? I got on an elevator one time with a pro football player. He was holding his little baby like a teddy bear he won at the fair. He was about three inches taller than me and big as a refrigerator and he didn't have to do a thing. I just sensed the strength in that man standing on that elevator. It made me feel like a little boy. That's what He's talking about. You be inwardly, inherently strong.

Now, He's already alluded to the fact in verse 5 that there is going to be opposition. And we've got to get this in our minds. The warfare was not in the wilderness, the warfare was in Canaan, in the land which God had given to them. There's going to be opposition to us, and so therefore what He's talking about is that no man will be able to stand before you. But they're going to try. They're going to try. You're going to have some things that you're going to deal with in order to possess what God says is already yours.

God tells Joshua, "When you face those who would take from you what I have given you, be inwardly strong." Now that word for courageous is the word meaning to be stout, immovable. I love again the Greek translation, Septuagint, of the Old Testament, and it says it uses the word that says, "act like a man." I like that. "Joshua, when you get in the face of opposition, you be strong, son, you be immovable. Act like a man. You face what's coming to you and you deal with what it is." You have to deal with it. The idea of being spiritually fit. It has the idea of being on the alert, being honed, being conscious of what may hinder you, being aware. So in my words, what I would say to get it across is: be growing strong from within, because when you possess what God has given, it's not going to be without opposition. Stand firm in the face of the battle.

Well, how do you do this, Wayne? How do you do this? Many people have said to be many times, "Wayne, I wish you'd be more practical." I always thought I was, but I tell you what, this book is practical from start to finish. The practical part of everything we've done for two years is right here in Joshua. It's going to put it together for us, connect the dots, and we're going to begin to understand what we have been studying for so long.

How do you do this? How do you grow to become strong, to face the opposition that is in front of us? The phrase is used again three times in three verses, and each time it's attached to a principle that kind of frames our outline for what we're going to talk about tonight. "Be strong, and take courage."

Be encouraged by God's promises

First of all, to grow inwardly strong, to be courageous, we must be encouraged by God's promises. It is God's promises that encourage and excite us into the light He has given to us. God told Joshua in verse 5, you remember that's connecting it, not to worry about those who would seek to stand before him. He says that, "I'll be with you, Joshua. Just like I was with Moses, I'll be with you. I'll not fail you, I will not forsake you." Now, that's a promise and a principle.

God will see to it that Joshua and Israel possess what is theirs if they simply walk depending upon Him. God is the source of all of our strength. He was a source of strength for Moses. He's going to be the source of strength for Joshua. He's the divine source. And what He promises, He delivers. And it's just this thing that excites us. When we hear what God says, when we understand His promises, we want to step out on them. It excites us to experience the life He promises is ours. So He tells Joshua, "Be strong and courageous." By the way, that's not a suggestion. That's in the imperative, that's a command. "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give to them."

Now, there is an assuredness. He assures Joshua, "It's going to happen, Joshua. It's going to happen. For you shall give this people possession of the land. Joshua, stand on what I'm telling you. Gain strength from my promise to you, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give to them."

You know, the beautiful thing here is, he says, "Joshua, you're simply one in a long line of those I've involved in bringing you and the nation of Israel to this place. Now stand on what I've said! Stand on My promise. Take it to the bank and move on." See, God through His promises causes us to grow strong. If you don't know the promises of God, then what are you standing on? What is it that excites you to say yes to God? What is it within you? The promises of God do that. They encourage our heart to face whatever comes in possessing what He says is ours.

Now, I want you to think about this. This is the land. He gives them a promise. His word is solid, you can stand upon it. But God didn't give us a land, He gave us a life. What are the promises God has given to us that we can take to the bank, things that He has said that excite our hearts and encourage our hearts? In Ephesians 1:3, I love this verse, "Blessed—that word means "to be praised"—be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why? What's the promise here? What is it He says that is so solid for you and me? "Who has blessed us." I love the tense there. Who is not going to bless us, who is not blessing us, but who has already blessed us. Well, what did He bless us with? "With every," you say, "Wayne, I've got a King James and it says 'all,' that's

okay. "Every" and "all" kind of mean the same thing. You can use either one you want to. Relax! God has given you every what kind of blessing in the heavenly places in Christ? Every spiritual blessing has been given to us in the heavenly places in Christ. Now, who does Paul write this to? He writes it to a discouraged group of people in Ephesus. If you've not been to Ephesus, I've been there, going to take a group when we go to Greece, I can't tell you how when you go there you begin to understand Ephesians. The rich intelligentsia, it was one of the wonders of the world. People would come from everywhere to see Ephesus. And yet, here's this little church there that's been beat up. It was the height of paganism, the temple of Diana at the top of the hill, and as you'd walk up that hill, the huge libraries where they had the great wisdom and intelligence, as you walked up the hill little shops where they would buy the statues of Diana to take away and worship. These people were so lost but didn't know it. And so you see, that little church was in the middle of it and they were just humiliating them and embarrassing them. And Paul says, "Hey! You're rich, friend, spiritually rich. You have been given everything."

Now, you can sit down and try to list all the blessings you'd like to ask God for, but He's given you spiritually every one of them already. You don't have to ask for patience, you already have it. You don't have to ask for peace, you already have it. You don't have to ask for joy, you already have it. God promises it to you in Christ. That is something He has said that should incite your heart of what He has promised.

Verse 16 tells us how to appropriate it. It sounds almost like He's speaking to Joshua in the Old Testament. Ephesians 3, "He said that He would grant you, I pray this [he was praying] 'according to the riches of His glory [which he says in verse 8 are unsearchable, there's so many of them], to be strengthened with power through His spirit [but where?] in the inner man.'" Just exactly what God told Joshua: "I will be your strength from within, and you'll be able to stand against whatever comes to oppose you, to possess what is already yours." You see, we need to learn to stand on the promises that are ours, to allow the Spirit to be our strength from within.

And, by the way, we don't have physical enemies. They had the Amorites, and the Amalakites, and the termites, and everybody that was in the land of Canaan. We don't have physical enemies. He tells them in Ephesians who the real enemy is. It's not those intelligentsia, it's not the rich and the powerful. He says in 6:4, "for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and the powers and the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

And then, in the book of Galatians which we just studied, he tells us something else about an enemy. He says in verse 17, "for the flesh, it sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another so that you may not do the things that you please." And then in Romans 12:2, he says, "Don't be conformed to this world." And what you see is a triune enemy that we face. We face the world, the flesh and the devil. And they work in tandem to defeat us in our walk with Christ. And that's our opposition, and it comes to us in many forms, it comes to us in many ways, but we have to wrestle with that, with the fact that it's a spiritual warfare that we're in. And here we are, trying to possess what we already have, to enter into the life that we already have, but there's so much opposition. The flesh pulls us this way, the world has already set its traps, and the devil attacks those who seek to walk in obedience to the Lord. So we must learn God's promises in the midst of this.

Understand that we're in boot camp down here on earth. We must learn to be encouraged by what God has said and this excites us into the life which He has already given to us. When we begin to hear with our ears how He loves us, when we begin to hear what He has promised to us, when we begin to hear the riches that we have that are unsearchable, it excites us to want to possess what He says is ours.

Now, I want you to remember something. You've got to tie this to the crisis. Don't forget, this is not isolated Scripture. He's going to put you into a crisis where this is going to become real in your life. I don't know how many times we were going into Communist Romania, and many times for a month or so at a time, and we would go in at different places and different ways, we would meet somewhere in the country and there was no Plan B. And I remember the verse that was so beautiful to me in the fact that He said in Hebrews that He will not leave us nor forsake us. I never felt alone, even though I stayed by myself. We were not allowed to know where the other person was staying so that if the secret police stopped us we couldn't tell them anything. And if you missed a rendezvous, you're just in a country that doesn't speak English, and is very hostile towards Christians, and it was an interesting life. You didn't have Plan B. All you had was faith. If God didn't come through, you're sunk! I remember how many times "I'll never leave you nor forsake you," that promise kept coming back to me. It encouraged me to step out and enter what God had already given me.

I remember one night we went to a pastor's church and preached. You could always tell the Communists who were there. Almost every church I could have spotted them. And this church in particular. The guy sat there, and I mean, bone-chilling, sobering, mean stare at you. He had sunglasses on in a dark night, and a dimly lit church. It was kind of easy to figure out who was who. And I never will forget the boldness to preach the gospel right in his face. And it wasn't to slam him, it was just something that God gave me when I was over there that I will never, ever forget, and will always be grateful for understanding that.

As we finished the service that night we went over to the pastor's little house and we were going to eat dinner. Somebody had driven over a hundred miles to get potatoes so we could have French fries. They had heard that Americans liked French fries. I always accused them of knowing I was coming because I just love French fries. And they had chicken livers. I've never liked chicken livers.

But they tasted like T-bone steak that night when I realized how poor these people were and what they had done to give us that meal. And they will not eat—you can beat them over the head—they will not eat until you eat and they only eat what is left over.

We ate our meal and then they were going to take us and lead us out of town, because under Communism you're stopped every mile, every three quarters of a mile, and checked. And this pastor knew his way around those road blocks. We went out and got in the car, five of us and the pastor was in front of us in his little car. And I'll never forget what happened. As soon as we started off, there was a car right on our bumper, probably a foot away from the bumper. No lights were on, with four men inside. It was very obviously secret police. And we were riding down the road, and Dorie Van Stone was with us, and she began to get really nervous. And she began to pray, and she began to quote these Scriptures. And it just hit me when I was studying this passage, she began to go by "God, you promised you'd never leave us or forsake us." And she just kept going, because we just didn't know what was next.

And all of a sudden the pastor had a horrified look on his face and he said, "Oh, no! I've got a box of Christian tracts in the trunk of the car. One tract sent a man to prison for almost ten years." He has a whole box of them in the trunk. He was supposed to have left them and forgot them! And here we are with the secret police right behind us, the pastor in front of us, and we prayed, "Oh, God! God! Give us wisdom. Oh, God, You said all the wisdom is in Christ Jesus. He's a treasure house for the wisdom and knowledge of God. Give us understanding of what to do.

We came to the intersection and the pastor turned left. And just like that it hit this pastor to turn right. And we so confused the secret police, they didn't know which one to follow. So they followed the pastor, which gave us the opportunity to make a huge loop and go back around and take that box of tracts and throw it over into a field so that later on the pastor could get it without getting caught. And when we went by where the way was that we were supposed to go out, the pastor was up against the wall and they were frisking him and had their guns out, had his car doors open and the trunk open, and we just eased right on by and went right on out of town. I'll never forget those times.

When life is going well and you've got money in the bank and food on the table and children are healthy and everything's fine, I want to promise you that these promises won't mean a thing to you like they will when you're at the point of desperation and you have nothing else to do but to turn to God and you cry out to Him. And in the midst of the crisis you stand on the promise that God has given to you, and God manifests Himself in a way that shakes you to your boots. That's what it's all about! We've got to be encouraged by the promises of God. When you're in a crisis situation, understand what God has said. You don't need to know what Wayne has said if it's not what God has said. Forget what Wayne has said. What has God said? I'm not the authority. God's Word is the authority, which leads me to my second point.

Examine God's word

Not only should we be encouraged by God's promises, but we need, if we're going to know God's promises to be encouraged by them, we must examine God's Word. This comes up in Joshua 1:7-8 as clear as can be. If we're going to stand on what God has said, then we need to know what He has said. It's amazing to me how many people struggle with this. I did for years. I got so involved in ministry that I forgot about what the whole purpose was about. If it's not in here, it's not worth doing.

God tells Joshua in verse 7,

"Only be strong and very courageous." I like that word "very." He sort of emphasizes it a little bit there. "Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth; but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it, for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success."

It's in the Word of God that one discovers not only the promises of God, but he also finds the will of God; not only the promises by which to be encouraged, but the will of God by which to be directed. And the two have to fit together. To do God's will one must know what His will is. The phrase, "so you will have success wherever you go" is an awesome phrase. The word "success" is the word meaning "you'll learn to act wisely in whatever you do." Success is not having a great business and money in the bank. It means you'll learn to act as you should, prudently, with discretion and discernment in the midst of the battle. It carries the idea of making wise choices, of discerning situations and how to respond properly when the temptations come. Because, remember, the flesh is going to tempt us to step outside of what God has given to us. And we're going to be able to discern when those temptations come. We're going to be able to discern the traps that the world has set around us. We're going to be able to discern the warfare that we're in.

Growing strong and courageous from within will be to the degree—and I want to say this in a way that you don't hear "law" in it, but I want you to understand responsibility in it. Sometimes we confuse the two, but there is a responsibility here—it's going to be with the degree we are willing to spend time in God's Word. I don't mean you're more spiritual if you spend an hour and a half; that's not

what I'm talking about. It's an attitude toward the Word. But to the degree we're willing to spend time in God's Word, willing to surrender and obey whatever He says, will be the degree to which we grow strong and courageous from within. There will be no strength and no courage if you don't know what God says and the context in which it's said. Life can hit us in the face so suddenly that we're caught completely off guard if we're not spending time with God in His Word.

Verse 3 lays out for us what is involved in doing just that. I love this! It's just so clear! "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouths." That's an interesting phrase. It has the idea of one who speaks with authority. I just love this! Joshua was their leader, we know that. And if he did not allow God's Word to be his wisdom, then what he said to the people would have no authority. So don't let what you get from here depart from what you say here. It's amazing to me how many years I thought I was so intelligent and didn't have any authority on anything I said, because I wasn't in the Word of God. I did ministry; as a matter of fact, I was in the ministry eight years before I got saved. It's really good to have saved ministers. It's amazing what a difference that will make in a church!

So often when I bring this up, you don't know me that well, I've only been here two years. I thought I've shared a lot of my life, but you still don't know a whole lot about me. I've been on that other side. I've played that game. I know how to play it. I know how to get numbers. I know how to do those things, that's not what we're about. No! No! There's no authority unless it comes from the Word of God. Let this Book never depart from your mouth.

It's just incredible to me how many folks, even today, and I've been there so I can't really throw a rock, how many people speak intelligently in church and have no authority in what they say, because it's not filled with what God has said. "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success."

Now, that word "meditate" is the word that draws for us the most powerful picture and practical picture of how to entertain this Scripture in our lives that I know of. It can be translated to "ponder." And this is a cute translation. I mean, it really means this: it means to groan when you're enjoying something. You know how you just mull over it. It's like eating that rib eye, 22 ounces, cooked just right with a baked sweet potato and all that good stuff they put in there; and a salad with Thousand Island dressing on it. And you take that thing and cut it and eat it. Have you ever heard somebody that's really enjoying it, just mmmmm! They're not talking to anybody. They're just enjoying it. It means to "ponder" something to the greatest extent of enjoying it. Mmm!

You've never heard that before, just go out to eat with me sometime and I'll show you what that's like. It's one of my greatest recreation is going out to restaurants. Somebody, years ago, and I tried to find it for this message and I apologize because I couldn't, but it stuck in my brain and it will not leave me. It was a scholar who was commenting on this word, "meditate," and he made a statement which he should not have made because it just captured my mind. He said it's like a cow chewing a cud. Now, have you ever thought about that?

But those cows will chew that cud! I used to love the cows. When I was in Chattanooga, the guy behind me had 40 some acres that were just cattle. It wasn't mine, but they came up to my fence all the time and I got the advantage of seeing them and not having to take care of them. And I loved to walk out there sometimes and I listened to them for so long. You've got to be one of them or they won't respond to you. And they always had their backsides turned to me, and I don't know why that was, and they'd be eating the grass and I'd walk out there and they know a brother when they hear one. And I'd walk out there and I'd say, "Mooooo!" If you do it right, they'll turn and look around. And they'll walk over and just get to the fence. I'd tell those cows anything I wanted to tell them. They're the only creatures that listened to me in the whole city.

But those cows, I don't know how many stomachs they have—it's three or four, it's a bunch, more than one—they'll chew that cud and chew that cud, and you can hear them while they're chewing. They're enjoying that thing. You think I'm being silly, but that's the word! Pondering what they're chewing. And then what do they do? They swallow it. And then what do they do later on? It burps back up and they chew it some more. Chew it some more! Chew on it and chew on it!

You say, "Wayne, you're being facetious!" No, I'm not! If you'll get into God's Word and start meditating on it, chewing on what He says, "Does He say that? Does He say I have all things? Does He say that He loves me? Unconditionally? Does He say that I'm not under some legalistic standard? Does He say all of that?" Ponder it! Ponder it! Swallow it. Go to work, and watch what happens. He'll burp it up on you before the day is over. I promise you! I promise you! You get into the Word of God and you won't finish the day before God will bring that Word right back up to you.

And you're sitting there in your office or doing whatever you're doing and you start chewing on them again. "That's really good." John Phillips who has written all the books, a set of commentaries exploring everything, I spoke with him at a conference and we were out to eat and I said, "John, what's your secret to studying the Scriptures?" I always want to learn from people who can help me. He said, "Wayne, I spend at least five hours a day just meditating on God's Word, without a pencil in my hand. Just letting God repeat that Word to me over and over and over again." That blessed me. That's exactly what that word is talking about. You're applying this. I'm so committed to this Book, and I understand that people sometimes don't understand me, and I'm so sorry for that. But I want

you to know that why I do what I do is because I love this Book! In this Book we find the promises of God!

This Book! Studying God's Word so radically changed my life 20 some years ago, I could never go to anything else. Been there! Get in to this Book. If you want to know what the promises of God are that will encourage and excite your heart, to possess what God says is already yours, you've got to get into the Book for yourself. To hear it from Wayne is one thing; to hear it from God, purely from the Word, is quite a different experience. And He lets you meditate on it and chew on it and chew on it and chew on it, and it begins to take root in your life.

There are three steps to studying God's Word, in case you don't know how to do this. I just want to hit them briefly. If there's ever anything we can do to help you, that's where we're headed as a church, to be an equipping church. To help people, to equip people to get into the Word for themselves.

The first step is observation. What does the text say? That's the first step, always. You never interpret before you observe. This is the problem many have of jumping into a Scripture without its context. Any text without a context is a pretext. So you observe: What is He doing here? What does the Scripture say?

Secondly, is interpretation. Why do I use the languages? Not because I'm trying to impress anybody. Because interpretation goes into those languages, you've got to dig a little deeper to find the truest meaning. You say, "Wayne, I don't know those languages." Listen, don't hear me wrong. If you never had known those languages, the Holy Spirit will bring that truth to your heart. But here's the difference: when you get into interpretation and you begin to learn how to do it for yourself, what happens is a 19 inch black and white boring television set with basic channels, becomes a 60 high definition TV with satellite! Does it change the meaning? Absolutely not! But what it does, it brings it up on the table where nobody can doubt what it is. And it puts the icing; it puts all the good stuff around it. You begin to understand it for the first time.

Then, application. And application is not, "Now that I've studied and interpreted, what does this text mean to me?" No, no, no! Please understand! You can make the Scriptures a cookbook if you want to with that approach if you want to. No, application is now that I know the truth which is without any private interpretation, then I need to learn how to adjust my life so that I can walk and live in what I have just discovered. What changes about me do I need to make in order for the Scripture to be real in my life if I truly meditated and studied God's Word?

He says, "Meditate on it day and night." It's so important. It's not for information that we can use to argue with our brother. No! It's for transformation of our life, to cause us to enter and stand on that which God has said to yield to Him. And it becomes His life in us and we experience to the degree we're willing to study, to meditate, and to say yes to Him. That's not a legalistic law. That's just a commonsense principle God gives us in His Word, a responsible principle. You see, some people take this message of grace with passivity. No, no, no! Discipline and determination are the two nails that keep us on the cross. We discipline ourselves to study, we determine that we want to be able to experience what God has. Now we can't go much beyond that, because God has to take that and then He brings us in, but we've got to be in the Word of God.

"Be careful to do according to all that's written in it," he says. Verse 7 says, "Don't turn from it to the right or to the left." Allow it to totally affect you to where even what you say—that depart from your mouth—is seasoned with it. Boy, that's just to me the perfect picture of those who enter what God says is already theirs. Who are those who are possessing what God has says is given to them in Christ? They are those who are yielded to God's will, who are meditating in His Word, not turning from it to the right or to the left. People that want to experience what they already have heard that by grace is already theirs in Christ. Paul says of the Word of God in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired"—and this is prophetic because they didn't have all the canon put together at that time—"by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

There's a play on words there. The word "adequate" is the same word as "equipped," but they're just different forms of that word, and what it means is so that the ship in the harbor is so fully stocked and supplied that it's ready to make the journey. You see, that's what it's all about: the Scriptures. "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it." Without it, His promises are vague, His power is untouched, and life overwhelms us. It completely defeats us. He says, "For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

The word "prosperous" is the word meaning many things in Hebrew. It can be translated many ways, but its main meaning is "victorious." That's what it means by success. Not success as the world sees success, but victorious. To be able to walk through a trial and face it with integrity because you know the promises of God and the Word of God and you know the life that is within you and as you yield to Him, He gives you the discernment and the wisdom and the strength to bear up under whatever it is you face.

The word translated "success" is our word we saw earlier. It means to act wisely and prudently. We must be encouraged by God's promises. It's part of the journey. In the midst of the crisis, we fall back on the things God has said. But to do that, we must be examining God's Word daily. Meditating on it day and night so that when those times come, we're ready, and when they're not there,

we just enjoy to the fullest what God has for us.

God's presence

But finally we must learn to expect God's presence. "Have I not commanded you?" verse 9, "Be strong and courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go." "Do not tremble or be dismayed. I am with you."

The word "tremble" is the word that means to stand back, to the point that you're so overwhelmed that you are paralyzed in your tracks by fear. The word "dismayed" means to be so frightened you fall to pieces. Don't be dismayed; don't tremble, because I'm with you. Knowing the promises of God and meditating on the Word will keep us from this type of response. When we're standing on the promises, when we're allowing God's Word to permeate our lives, when we begin to learn to expect God to show up, we learn to expect His presence.

An old gentleman who is dead now helped me with my walk with the Lord many years ago. He said, "Wayne, practice the presence of Christ. Because if you're saying yes to Him, He will immediately manifest Himself in some way. Maybe it's in strength for the journey, maybe it's in joy or peace, but whatever it is, He'll manifest that life within you. Even though you know you have it, He'll let you know He's there." He never leaves you. Expect the presence of God.

"What do I do, Wayne?" Here it is! This is what you do: be encouraged by the promises of God; but to know them, examine the Word of God. But learn to expect His presence. Don't beg for it, expect it! He shows up when He's honored by saying yes to Him.

I was standing at the door of a church I pastored years ago, and I was having a tough time. I didn't know these truths well, and I was just trying to learn them. A man who had cancer and was about to die walked out and he looked at me and I said, "Hey, Brother Mason, how are you doing?" He said, "Wayne, I'm doing fine. In the Lord, I'm doing fine. How are you doing, Wayne?" And I made the mistake of saying, "Well, I'm hanging in there. Have you ever seen that picture of that cat hanging there on the limb—I'm just hanging in there."

And you know what he said to me—here's a man dying of terminal cancer and knew he only had about two months to live—he squeezed my hand again and he said, "Son, don't you ever let me hear you say that again. Life is not hanging in there. Life is standing fast on the promises of God!" Boy, that rocked me! What I thought I was going through compared to what he was going through was nothing! And he helped me. That's how we live this life: possessing what we already have.

Joshua 1:10-18

1. Preparation for the Journey
2. Believe God's will is best
3. Do not be discouraged by others
4. Encourage one another and our leaders

Preparation for the Journey

Turn to Joshua chapter 1. Today we're going to be talking about preparation for the journey. What a beautiful picture we have in Joshua of a whole nation. Think about it: the nation of Israel, the whole nation of Israel, about to go into and possess what God says is already theirs, what He's already given to them. But here's the key, here's what speaks to me more deeply it seems every time I preach it: They're going in together. That's a beautiful picture. Together. Joining hands together, walking over into that which God has given to them. What a challenge for us as a church, for me, for you, to enter into what we have in Christ. But now listen. Together. Together, arm in arm, possessing what's ours in Christ.

I love Hebrews 4:11. It speaks of the rest that we have in Christ. It says, "Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that rest," and look what he says, "so that no one will fall through following the same example of disobedience." And he points back to when Israel at one point in their history chose not to go into the land God had for them; into that land of rest that God had for them. You see, to me, that's what the church is all about. That's what we're here for—me to help you, you to help me, us to help each other enter that which God says is already ours.

Isn't it interesting how God simply told Joshua, "Joshua, you want to be a leader, son? I know Moses is dead; if you want to be a leader, you just be a follower." Do you understand? Being a leader is simply being a follower of God. And He tells Joshua, "Joshua, if you'll just follow Me, they'll follow you. Meditate in My Word, Joshua; consider every step as holy unto Me. Expect My presence in your life and they'll follow you." You see, if we want to be leaders to others, whether it be a father to a family—I'm particularly concerned about men—and men if you want to be a leader to your family, then be a follower. Be the kind of follower that meditates

in the Word of God. Be the kind of follower that considers every step holy unto God, expecting His presence in your life, and they'll follow you. It's the same way with any of us in any area of our life.

Well, we learned from Joshua that one of the ways God reveals Himself to us is that He puts us in a crisis situation in order to teach us how to trust Him. We can talk about trusting all we want, but when money is in the bank, everybody is healthy, things are going well, there's not a lot of trust there. But when we're in the midst of a crisis is when we discover who He really is. And that's how He teaches us to trust Him. He carefully creates circumstances that bring us to the end of ourselves, to the point of desperation. It's in those circumstances that we have no Plan B. When you have no Plan B, that's where you want to be. That's when you're walking by faith. That's when you're totally trusting Him. That's when you will get into the Word. It's amazing how many people look to the Word for different things, but it's for transformation when you're in a crisis circumstance and you have no Plan B.

That's when you begin to meditate on the things God has said. That's when you begin to take your steps based on what God has said. And that's when you begin to experience His presence in your life. That's when God begins to encourage you and guide your steps and you begin to experience what's yours. It's been there all along, but it took a crisis to force it out; it took a crisis to bring you into what you already have. And I tell you what, you will not tremble, you will not be dismayed, as He says to Joshua, you won't fall to pieces, you won't fall apart when life throws its curve balls at you that you didn't know were coming. You're able to bear up under storms. You're able to act like men of faith because you're courageous and God is the source of your strength. That's what He's been telling Joshua for nine verses.

And in our text today, they're just about ready to make that journey into the land that God had given to them. It starts in verse 10, and the first thing you see him doing is that he's giving commands to his officers there. It says in verse 10, "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people." Now, these officers were like adjutants; they were staff officers, they simply took what God had said to Joshua, what Joshua had said to them, and they took it then to the tribes to tell them what the orders were. In verse 11 we find what he says: "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God has given you to possess it.'"

They had three days in which to prepare for this journey. The wonderful thing about this particular time period in Israel's history is that this group of people was willing to obey God; therefore, they were willing to say yes to Joshua. Forty years before, they had the same decision to make, but they chose not to obey God. They chose to disobey. Moses had sent 12 spies into the land. Ten of them had come back with a very negative report. They saw the giants in the land. They saw things that they thought they could not handle. But Joshua and Caleb, men of faith, men who served God with their whole heart, they came back and said, "Hey, we can eat them for lunch! Let's go! God has given it to us."

But they chose to believe the majority of the committee report, and as a result of it they ended up walking around Mt. Sinai for 40 years and they died in the wilderness. But this is a new day. These are the children; these are the next generation. These are the ones who said, "We're not going to make the same mistakes as our fathers. We're going to obey God; we're going to go into that land that God has given to us." It was just a short distance from the time that they crossed the Red Sea into the land, and yet it had been 40 years and nobody had possessed what God says was already theirs.

Something that is important for us to consider in this passage is that we know that the Jordan River, the crisis they faced, was in flood stage. And not one time does Joshua say to prepare the boats. "Bring out the engineers, let's build a pontoon bridge." Nowhere does he even mention that. God said prepare the provisions, so that's what he told the people. You see, Joshua wasn't about to second-guess God, to try to help Him out for things that God hadn't thought about. He just simply took Him at His word. And therefore he told them: "You prepare provisions for the next three days because we're about to enter the land."

"Pass through the midst of the people," verse 11 says, "and command the people, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for in three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.'" Joshua knew that He had already parted the Red Sea, so He could part these waters. That's just a minor detail. Now, the manna was still falling every day. I think the Hebrew word for manna is, "What is it?" And God gave them manna every day. Now that manna had to be eaten each day or it would spoil, so he couldn't be talking about "stack up your manna, put it in a pack," because it would spoil, so he had to be talking about something that would last longer and would strengthen their bodies as they go over into the land. But that's not our message today. That's just the provisions He tells them to prepare. They're getting ready to go into the land.

The message today has to do with a group of Israelites. In fact, two and one half tribes that help us understand what goes on in Christianity today when many people refuse to go on into that which God has given them. They refuse to possess what God says is already theirs. Verses 12-18, Joshua has a special word for these two and a half tribes. They are the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. You see, these two and a half tribes have decided not to take land where God had given it to them, but they had decided to camp on the other side, to build their homes, to take their land on the wrong side of the Jordan River. They were content to live on the fringe, but they were not willing to go over and reside in the land.

To relate to this today, there are many believers, even today in the twenty-first century, and they come to understand that God has given to them a life in Christ Jesus. Every spiritual blessing is theirs, that they can walk in the fullness and the joy and the peace and the power that God has for them. But because of what they think they've found that's better, they refuse to go on over into that which God has given to them. They're interested only in themselves. We see this picture today in a most clear way. They will not possess what is theirs in Christ.

Well, in verse 12, let me read it for you as you follow along and then we'll jump into the message. Verse 12 says, "To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 'Remember the work that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying: "The Lord your God gives you rest and will give you this land. Your wives, your little ones and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you." "Which Moses gave you." I'm saying this for a reason: "which Moses gave you. Don't forget that phrase. God did not give it to them. Moses gave it to them. "Which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, until the Lord gives your brothers rest, as He gives you, and they also possess the land which the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.' They answered Joshua saying, 'All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses. Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous.'"

Now, we're going to look at these two and a half tribes and try to be encouraged by them. The crisis had been created: the Jordan had flooded its banks. They were about to go over. Joshua had a word from God. They had been in the word and they were now ready to stand on what God had said. But yet, you've got these two and a half tribes. What can we learn from them in our journey together to possess what God says is already ours?

Believe God's will is best

First of all is this: we must believe that God's will is best. Now, folks, this is one of the most important things I've said to you in two years. We must believe that God's will is best. If you don't believe that, when you get into a crisis situation you will bail out on God in a minute. If you're praying for a loved one to be healed and God chooses not to do that, you have to believe that God's will is best. You see, what happens is when you don't, you tend to camp out on the other side, the opposite side of the Jordan. You miss out on what God had for you. You see, hinging on the unreasonable things of life lie the unexpected blessings that God has. There are good things in life; there are better things in life; but the best things in life only come from God. Romans 12:2 says something about the will of God. He says, "in order that you might prove for yourselves what is the will of God—that which is good, that which is acceptable and that which is perfect." Do we really believe that the will of God is perfect? That what He has for us is the best? We've got to be encouraged with this this morning. We've got to remember that if you're going to walk in what God says is yours, you've got to believe that it's the best. It's the best.

In order to understand how these Israelites ended up on the wrong side of the Jordan, we've got to go back into Scripture. So if you'll turn to Numbers 32:1-15, we're going to see some things that may help us understand what we're talking about today. God's will is best.

Numbers 32:1: "Now the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad had an exceedingly large number of livestock." Now, that's important; they needed grazing land. "So when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that it was indeed a place suitable for livestock [now this is on the wrong side, this is the wilderness side of the Jordan], the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben came and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the congregation saying,... [skip to verse 4] the land which the Lord conquered before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock.... If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession; do not take us across the Jordan."

Now, that all sounds reasonable, doesn't it? I mean, after all, Wayne, you're making a big deal out of this. They're cattle farmers, they have cattle, they need grazing land, and look where they were: in the land of Gilead on the other side of the Jordan River. It has all the grass that you want. You may not know this, but when they were standing on that one side of the Jordan River, do you know what they were looking at? The Judean wilderness. And that's the most barren looking place you've ever seen in your life. It was just a barren looking place. They did not know that on the other side of those mountains was the Fertile Crescent. And that became, later on, the biggest problem of taking the land; because these people did not go on and obey God. They did not know what was on the other side of the mountain. And they found grass that was good for their cattle. They go to Moses and say, "Come on, this is what we need. Give us land here."

Verse 6: "But Moses said to the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, 'Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here?'" See, the land that God was going to give to them they already knew was going to be filled with conflict. They were preparing for battle. Do you understand that when you start possessing what God has given to you, that's when the battle begins? That's when the real conflict is. That's when the world, the flesh, and the devil begin to hit you with everything it's got. Over in the wilderness,

flesh rules anyway; but when you go into the land, when you start saying yes to God, that's when the conflicts begin. And these people conveniently had found a place that met their needs, their eye thought was pleasing, and had no conflict to it. And so they said, "We want to stay on this side of the river."

'In verse 7: Moses said, "Now, why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the Lord has given them?" They didn't realize that their selfish decisions to find what they thought was best for them was going to affect the whole body of Israel. It was going to become a discouragement to others. Others would look and say, "Why are we going over there if you can stay here?" And this is what Moses brings to their mind. It can cause others to not even enter what God had given to them. Moses reminds them, verse 8: "This is what your fathers did [their very fathers had done the same thing] when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land." And he recounts that spy experience. "For when they went up to the valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the sons of Israel so that they did not go into the land which the Lord had given them." Moses just simply references what we talked about a moment ago, that when the 12 spies came back, they believed the committee report; they chose not to obey God, but to stay in the wilderness.

And Moses reminded them of how this angered God. "So the Lord's anger burned in that day and he swore saying [verse 11], 'None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully.'" Then He says with two exceptions, "except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the Lord fully.' So the Lord's anger burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil in the sight of the Lord was destroyed." This was a very serious mistake that they made.

And Moses says in verse 14: "Now behold, you have risen up in your father's place, a brood of sinful men, to add still more to the burning anger of the Lord against Israel. For if you turn away from following Him, He will once more abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people." Your decision to stay here is going to destroy all the rest of them that want to go into that which God has given them. By their own selfish choice they became a hindrance to others.

Isn't it amazing how the Israelites chose not to go over into the land because they thought they had found something that was better? They didn't understand and believe that God's will is always best. As I said a moment ago, hinging on the unreasonable. They looked at the Judean wilderness, they didn't realize on the other side of that was the Fertile Crescent. They didn't understand that. But if they would have believed God, they could have entered what God said was already theirs—better grazing land than they ever thought about having. But they chose second best. You can't do that. They had no idea how this choice even would affect others.

In our possessing what God has given us, He didn't give us a land; I don't have to worry about cows and grazing. But God gave us a life, He gave you a life. We have to realize that if we're going to walk in the fullness of what that life offers; we don't even know. We see it in Scripture and we think we understand, but until we're in a crisis and believe God, we don't even have a clue what God's talking about. You see, some people today as believers still choose not to walk on into that which God has given them. They'll hang around, but they'll opt out for success, they'll opt out for money. "Wayne, I can't make the money. If I go all the way with God, and I give it all over to Him, I may lose everything that I have. I can't go that far, Wayne." They make all kinds of reasons. You see, but the bottom line is they're content to live on the wrong side of the Jordan. They'll live on the fringe, but that's as far as they are going to go. And we can't let these people keep us from possessing and experiencing what God says is ours in Christ Jesus.

Let me ask you a question. As I'm preaching and as I'm teaching this and you're thinking, who comes to your mind right now that you've had your eye on? As you've got your eye on the Lord and you kind of enjoy hearing what you have in Christ, you don't particularly like hearing that you've got to be in a crisis to possess it. That's kind of tough. You've got to be in a desperate situation before you really understand what you're talking about. But you're close; you're really close. You're right there at the edge of the Jordan. But out of the other eye you're watching somebody that everybody thinks is the greatest Christian in the world; money rolling out of their hands, everything is going well for them, their children are healthy, they've got a big house, they've got money in the bank, they've got gasoline in the car, no big deal. And you've got one eye over here thinking, "You know what? I don't really know what's there, but look what he has and he's not going that route. He's not committed. In fact, I was with him the other day and I heard him say some things to some people that Christians wouldn't say. I can see a double standard in his life, but look how he's being blessed. It seems like he's found something better. There's no commitment, there's no surrender, he can go to a Bible study once a week and call that his dues."

And yet you keep hearing that there's something that eye has not seen and ear has not heard. You keep understanding that God has a fullness in Him that you've never experienced before. And you're struggling. I want you to know that if you're struggling, it's probably because you have not yet come to the point that you believe that what God's will is, is best. It's best. It's not better, and it's not good. It's the best. And only by saying yes to Him do you enter into what you already have.

Do not be discouraged by others

So, the first thing is we've got to come to that point—and we're all here to encourage each other—where we all believe that what God does is best. It's best. Secondly, we cannot be disheartened when others around us come and they go. They come and they go. Once reprimanded by Moses, these tribes, to save face, made a promise to him that even though they were still going to live on this side of the Jordan, they were not going to stay and reside with God's people in what God had given, they would at least go into battle with them. They'd cross the Jordan in battle array, and they would help them win over their land. But they're going back when it's all over. Rather than give up the land and join their brothers, and possess the land God had given to them. That fertile land. He knew they were cattle-growers. He knew that the cattle needed grass, but rather than taking what God had given them, which was the very best land, they chose to stay where they were.

So Moses finally gives in. He makes a concession. That's why it says, over and over again, "Moses gave you." God is not in this picture. This is Moses: his decision. And in verses 16-24 you have the story of how Moses finally concedes. And they told him, "We're going to live on the opposite side, but we're going to help you when you go over into the land." Promises, promises. The two and a half tribes did keep their promise, but not wholeheartedly. Just like their fathers, just like their grandfathers, they didn't follow through wholeheartedly, and when it was over, they went back.

Now, you say, "Wayne, how do you know all that stuff? That's not in the Bible. I've read the Bible and it's not there." Well, you just read a little too quickly. It is there. Look in Numbers 1:2. Let me show you how many warriors they had. This is how many men, when they took a census of the people. When they numbered them, they didn't number them by husband, wife, and children. They numbered them by the males that were 20 years old and older who were able to fight. And that's how they numbered their tribes: by their armies. Look at Numbers 1:2: "Take a census of all the congregations of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their father's households [now here's how you do it] according to the number of names, every male, head by head, from twenty years old and upward, whoever is able to go out to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their armies." So they're told to number these tribes.

Now, the record is going to show that the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh are going to have 136,930 men that are ready to fight, 20 years old and older, able to go to war. "How do you know that?" Well, hang on. Numbers 26:7, 18, and 34. If you turn to Numbers 26 and add the three together, it comes out to 136,930. Verse 7: "These are the families of the Reubenites and those who were numbered of them were 43,730." Verse 18: "These are the families of the sons of Gad according to those who were numbered of them 40,500." Verse 34: "These are the families of Manasseh [and, of course, remember that half of the tribe is over in the land, so you have to cut this in half], and those who were numbered of them were 52,700." 136,930 men; out of the group of Manasseh, take out half of them. Take out 25,000, and you still have about 100,000 men.

Out of the 100,000 men that were eligible to go over and help their brothers capture the land which God had given to them, how many do you think actually went over with them? Look in Joshua 4:12-13; it tells you exactly how many. I want to show you how halfhearted these people are. Not even that much. Joshua 4:12: "The sons of Reuben, the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them." There was a promise they made and a concession Moses gave to them. But verse 13, about how many equipped for war crossed for battle? Forty thousand. Does this tell you something? It's always the way it is with these kinds of people that will not go on and possess what God says is theirs. They'll show up, but it's always half-hearted. Roughly one-third goes, and two-thirds stay back to protect those wives and children that they left behind.

It was a concession on Moses' part that they even got the land. It wasn't what God had intended. These tribes would rather have the big flocks and the big herds and they thought they had found where they could do it better than what God said was for them. Because of their greed they were located so far from the nation of Israel, so far from the place of worship, they had to erect a monument to teach their children that they were still a part of the nation of Israel. That's Joshua 22:10.

Now, does that sound familiar today? Does that sound familiar to you today of Christianity? "Well, brother, when did you get saved?"

"I got saved 30 years ago. It was at a revival meeting, it was in a tent, I remember the song that they sung. And I remember going forward and I remember giving my heart to Jesus."

"That's wonderful. What's God doing in your life today?"

"Oh, man! Let me tell you about that meeting! That preacher came in from somewhere. He preached the greatest message and I remember giving my heart to Him...."

"That's wonderful, but what's Jesus doing in your life today?"

"Man, I got saved 30 years ago!" I know, I know!

Let me change my question, "Where do you go to church?"

"I go to ____ Church."

"Oh, you do? What's the pastor been preaching on lately?"

"I actually, I haven't been very much recently."

"Well, when was the last time you can remember you went?"

"Well, eight years ago at Christmas I went to a musical."

Does that remind you of anybody? People that come in but decide to camp out on the wrong side of the Jordan. They just won't go on over and receive what is theirs God has given. They have to erect some kind of memorial; they have to do something as a token to even assure others that they're still a part of the same group. But their eyes have never been focused on Christ. Their lives have never been surrendered to Him.

Here's what I want to say to you. These people may give to a special church building program. "That would be a way to save face! I'll give a big check. I'll write a check out." And they give a token. Or they may show up for different things, but I'm telling you, they always go back to where they've chosen to reside. They're here, but then they're there. This can be a huge source of discouragement. I want you to know that I'm telling you not to be discouraged by people like this, but that's the very thing that discourages me in my walk. I am ashamed to tell you. It just gets to the point sometimes when I see people just walk away from the very message that can set them free and it just kills me. And even many times, and this is what happens almost every time, it hinders me from enjoying what I know is mine in Christ. That's what happens.

What I want to share with you is, folks, don't let two and a half tribes of the nation of Israel keep you from enjoying what God has for you. What I want to say to you collectively as a church, let's don't let the two and a half tribes keep us as a church from experiencing what God has for us in the days ahead. You see, what happens is, you start seeing these people, and you grow so discouraged. Those two and a half tribes, the first time when they made that decision, Moses said they were going to discourage the whole group.

A man that came to my church, I loved him; I thought he was a great man. He just loved the teaching on the fullness of Christ, the living grace message, Christ in you the hope of glory. Oh, he couldn't wait to tell all of his friends about it. But what happened was, he started watching some of his friends that were just making money and everything was going well, and he thought that was what it meant by having a good life. He didn't realize that this is a spiritual thing, not a tangible thing on the outside. He called me one day and I had breakfast with him and he said, "I want to tell you something." And it broke my heart. He said, "I've heard you preach all these years and I've memorized the verses and I've done the Bible studies and I've even got into Precept. I still have my same crummy job, I still have my same crummy salary, and my children are so rebellious they're driving me nuts. I don't want this stuff any more!" And he went and camped out on the wrong side of the Jordan.

I had to make up my mind. What am I going to do? Am I going to let him discourage me from going on to be what God wants me to be? That's what you've got to do. You're going to have people in your family make the same decisions. But don't let them discourage you from receiving what God says is already yours in Christ Jesus.

Encourage one another and our leaders

So, the first thing is, we've got to believe that God's will is the best. Period. Whatever He does is right and never needs defending. It is the best. Hinging on the unreasonable things of life lie the unexpected blessings of God. But secondly, we can't allow ourselves to be disheartened or discouraged by people who just come and go. They camp on the wrong side of the Jordan.

But the third thing, and to try to tie all this together, we must learn to encourage one another, and especially our leaders. Now when I say leaders, I'm not talking about a Joshua. We don't have Joshuas today; we don't have Moses today. We have Jesus as the Shepherd of our church. When I talk about a leadership, I'm talking about people that have already made that decision: I'm going to go on; life's going to work for me not against me. I'm going to possess what God says is mine in Christ Jesus. We need to learn to encourage these people. I tell you why: They set the pace for the rest of us.

What happens is, and Paul said the same thing in Philippians, "there are so many now that have become encouraged because of my boldness to speak the things that I ought to speak." It's the same thing. It's contagious. We've got to learn to encourage one another. Not to discourage, but to encourage. With the pull of the world, the flesh, and the devil on every one of us, all of us have our own family situation we deal with, our own personal things we deal with; we've got to learn to encourage each other. Keep on, son, keep on. Keep on possessing what God says is already yours.

Verse 16: A great encouragement came to Joshua. It starts off saying "they answered." The "they," remember, the context is not these two and a half tribes. The context is him speaking to all of his officers. He has a word for the two and a half tribes, and then he comes back and addresses all of the officers. Most every scholar I looked at, and I have to jump right in there with them, believes now he refers back now, he's speaking to every tribal leader, his officers that were going to relay the messages to the people. He

says in verse 16, “They answered Joshua saying, ‘All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we have obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you—only may the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses. Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words and all that you command him shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.’”

Man, what an encouragement this had to be to Joshua. These leaders didn’t dispute over the fact that, “Joshua, don’t you know that the river is flooded right now.” They didn’t dispute over the fact that he said we’re going to cross it and didn’t mention anything about boats or anything else. They were so willing to just go on and do what God had told them to do. And they also told him, they said, “Listen, we’re going to watch your back. Anybody who rebels against you, we will deal with.” Folks, do you know that encouraging people is not just to their face, but it’s also to cover their back?

One of the great things that blesses me is to have my son here on staff. I just don’t see him much, he’s awfully busy, but I just love having him here; the friendship that God is building between the two of us. He doesn’t work under me, so I’m just there to encourage him and give direction from time to time. But you know what I love about him? There was a time since I’ve been here that it got a little frisky, that’s the best way to say it. My son called me, I answered the phone, I saw his number on the thing, and I said, “Hey, Bud, how you doing?” He said, “Dad, I just want to tell you that I love you.” And then he said this, “I also want you to know that I’ve got your back. I’ve got your back.”

We need to learn to encourage one another. “Go on! Go on! We’ve got your back and we’re with you all of the way.” That is so critical in the day in which we live; when we’ve got two and a half tribes of people who just won’t go over and reside in what God has given to them. Can’t be disheartened by them. We’ve got to believe that God’s will is best. But more than anything else, we’ve got to learn to encourage one another.

Now, this is not blind loyalty. That’s not what I’m talking about. You see, the people that you know who are possessing what God says is there have two qualities about them. Verse 17 and verse 18 bring both of them about: they’re in tandem. Verse 17 says only, and it’s a condition, “May the Lord your God be with you as He was with Moses.” When somebody is inheriting or possessing what they’ve already inherited in Christ, you’re going to see something about them, and you’re going to see the fact that they’re strong. What does that mean? We’ve covered it. It means that when situations in life throw a curve ball at them, they’re able to bear up under it in faith with a smile on their face, knowing God’s in control.

But they’re also courageous, which means that they’re acting like men of faith, they’re acting like people of faith, if it’s a woman. It’s all of us: people who walk through by faith are strong and courageous. And where does that come from? It comes from Christ who lives within them. Just like it came from God who was with Moses, who would also be with Joshua. That’s how you know. And that’s a condition. You don’t give blind loyalty to somebody who’s camped out on the wrong side of the Jordan. You give that loyalty to the people who are walking on, and you put your arm around them and you encourage them because, like I said, they’ll set the pace for everybody else. The second one is be strong and courageous. Those two are tied together. One simply explains the other. The leader must be a follower.

Well, let’s bring this to a close. How are you doing in your walk today? Who is it that has caused you to think twice about what God has for you in Christ being the best, because you sure see something good over here and it’s pulled your eyes off of that. Are your eyes on Christ or on those who choose not to be a part with others? Those who choose to camp out on the wrong side of the Jordan. It’s going to cost. Let me tell you this: the crisis, the conflict and the cost come in Canaan. And these guys knew that, that’s why there was no fight to fight on the other side. That’s why they made that token promise. It will come, but I want to tell you, whatever the outcome of that is, it’s going to be the best of anything you could ever experience in your life.

You know, folks, I’m not sure we even get a clue what it means to possess what is ours in Christ. There’s such a convenient, casual Christianity in America that we don’t really know what it is anymore. And there are always going to be those that camp on the wrong side of the Jordan. They think they’ve got it together. I call it a yuppie Christianity. It’s like it doesn’t make any sense to the Word of God, but yet they think they have it, never willing to cross that Jordan and give everything to Christ, and say, “Lord, here am I send me. Whatever You want is best for me and I choose Your will as supreme in my life.”

I tell you what, the people that are doing that, we need to encourage, because they’re setting the pace for the rest of us. We don’t need to be turned away by two and a half tribes. That still leaves nine and a half, folks, that went in. And we certainly ought to believe that God’s will is best.

Joshua 2

Our God Who Goes Before Us

Turn with me to the book of Joshua, and we're going to see a world record tonight. I'm going to cover a whole chapter in one message. You know that's a miracle. We're going to look at a whole chapter, and what we want to talk about is our God who goes before us. Wherever God guides, God provides. Have you ever heard that before? Wherever God guides, God provides. You're going to see that beautifully in Scripture tonight.

The scene in Joshua is electrifying. The people are preparing to cross the Jordan River and possess the land that God has given to them. God had wonderfully created a crisis, in that the Jordan River that stood between them and the Promised Land was at flood stage. It was swollen. It was out of its banks. This is not the time to cross the Jordan, but God chose to do otherwise. It was perfectly set up. You see, now Joshua and the people would be desperate enough to have to depend on Him. There would be no Plan B. If they were to possess what God was going to give to them, they were going to have to walk by faith. Faith, and only faith, would give them the victory to have what God said was already theirs.

God told Joshua that to lead the people he had to stay in the Word. He must meditate in the Word day and night. You see, meditating in God's Word was the only way that he would ever have any success. That word success means the only way he would ever understand how to respond to the given circumstances that were going to face him. God's Word—what God said to Joshua—was never to leave his mouth. If it did, he would have no authority to lead the others. It had to be what God had said.

The people were not to be discouraged by those who chose to camp out on the wrong side of the Jordan. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, we saw the last time, had chosen not to take the land that God had given to them in Canaan. They thought basically that they had found something better. And oh, the sadness of it was, they were standing with grass everywhere in grazing land for their cattle, looking across the Jordan River at the barren Judean wilderness, not realizing that on the other side of those mountains was the Fertile Crescent that would put what they had chosen to shame when it came to grazing their cattle. In fact, those people's choice not to take what God said was theirs, to camp out on the fringe on the other side of the Jordan, was the biggest hindrance to Israel in trying to possess the land that God had given to them.

You see, God has not given us a land, God has given us a life in Christ Jesus. He has designed it to be possessed and experienced only by faith. It will not be possessed or experienced other than faith. He creates calamity and trouble for us to drive us to His Word, and when we get to His Word, He speaks His Word to our heart, and then that's where faith is quickened. And faith and faith alone allows us to continue to experience what God has given. He tells us to live by the Word and in the Word. He tells us to stand "on what I have promised." And we're not to be discouraged by those who won't live by faith, to those who think that they've found something better, who want to camp out on the wrong side of the Jordan. We must learn to encourage one another. We must learn to walk arm in arm and go on together and possess what is ours in Christ, each of us watching the other's back. There are always going to be those people who choose to live on the fringe and they'll have a thousand reasons why, but you can't let those people keep you or keep me or any of us from possessing and experiencing what is ours in Christ Jesus.

Well, today we're going to look at the wonderful, wonderful truth about our wonderful God who always goes before us. While the people were preparing—they had three days to get ready to move to the Jordan River where they would then cross—as they were preparing to do that, something else was going on. God was busy preparing the way. Don't ever forget that where God leads, He's been there before. I think sometimes we don't understand that. "God, are you listening to me? Do You know where I am? Are you taking a nap in a big rocking chair on the porch in heaven? Or do You really know where I am and do You know who I am?" Oh, He knows, folks, nothing gets to us that hasn't had to pass by Him first.

You see, on the other side of the Jordan River, lying in the path that the Israelites would have to pass if they're going to possess the land, was the great walled city of Jericho. It was located in such a strategic spot that it commanded the passes to the central highlands. And you could not get up and over unless you went through Jericho. Jericho had to be taken. There would be no possessing of the land if that were not so. This is the biggest battle, the biggest city they're going to have to face.

It was interesting to me as I was studying this: We all have, not a Jericho in front of us, but a besetting sin in each of our lives. That besetting sin is our Jericho, and if we want to possess what God says is ours in Christ, then we're going to have to deal with the Jericho first, not last, but first. You see, Joshua has been there before as one of the spies, but that had been 40 years before. What he needed now was a fresh report about what was going on in Jericho. So he sent to spies who had to swim the swollen Jordan River and ease into the city, hopefully unnoticed. They didn't know it, but God was way ahead of them and had already prepared the way when they got there. They had no clue, they're just trusting God.

Now, let's get into the story, but I want you to continue to remember that wherever God is leading us, He has already gone before us; and if we will just trust Him, He will provide for you and for me each step of the way. He's always ahead of us, not just with us, but He's ahead of us.

God prepares a place for us to take refuge

Three things I want you to see in chapter 2 tonight, and I just hope that we can get through it and God will bless your heart with it.

First of all, I want you to see how God prepares a place for us to take refuge. Now, I want to say it again, just as the Israelites entered the land they encountered the biggest city, the biggest battle that they would have, so it is with us as we have to encounter the besetting sin in our life. But God protected them like He'll protect us. He protected them by giving them a place where they could find refuge from the enemy.

But with us, it's a little different in the New Testament. He doesn't give us a place, He IS the place that we find refuge. It's in Him. Verse 1 of chapter 2 says, "Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim saying, 'Go view the land, especially Jericho.'" Now before, they viewed the whole land, but now they're looking at Jericho. "So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab and they lodged there."

Now verse 1 tells us that the spies were selected secretly. Little did they know that once they got over to the land, their presence was not going to be so secret. They didn't know that but God did, and God had already taken care of that. God was far ahead of them. If you remember the first time that they sent 12 spies out 40 years before, the whole nation knew about it and when they came back, they reported to the nation. And ten of them had a negative report, except for Joshua and Caleb, and as a result the people failed to enter into what God said was theirs. They had to die in the wilderness; God would not allow them to go because they chose not to. Joshua now, left over from that, chooses not to make this a public announcement. He sends two spies secretly, without the people knowing that they were even there. While they were preparing, the spies were over in the land.

"Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two spies secretly from Shittim saying, 'Go view the land, especially Jericho,' so they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and they lodged there." Now the reference to Rahab being a harlot has tried to be softened by many commentators, and what they have said is that it really means innkeeper. I guess a different kind of inn! That won't hold up when you get to the New Testament, just won't do it. Hebrews 11, which I call the Hall of Faith, brings Rahab into the picture. This is a beautiful picture of God's grace, folks. And it says in Hebrews 11:31, "By faith, Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient after she had welcomed the spies in peace."

Now that word there for "harlot" is the word *porne*. It's the word which means a prostitute, not an innkeeper. It was a very immoral word, and it means exactly what it says. She's also referred to in the same way in James 2:25, and later on we'll bring that back into the message. Now God providentially led these two spies to her house. Once they were there He providentially protected them from the enemy in Jericho. He gave them a place of refuge. And this is what it was all about: God was so far ahead of them and they had no clue about it.

Joshua 2:2 says, "It was told the King of Jericho saying, 'Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land.'"

Now, somehow the King of Jericho found out that they were there and what they were doing. How did that happen? I don't know. They had to have known that the Israelites were camped out on the other side of the Jordan River. I mean, there were over a million and a half of them! And they're not that far away. You know good and well they knew that. I mean, the two and a half tribes had 136,000 men twenty years and older able to fight. Think of the wives and the children and the grandparents. I mean, this is a huge amount of people on the other side of the Jordan. So evidently the whole town was on alert.

Now, Joshua didn't know that and the spies didn't seem to think about that, but they were all alert and they saw these two strange men walking through the city and probably somebody followed them to the house of Rahab. However they knew—and that's really conjecture, we don't know—the King sent men to the house of Rahab to get the spies. Verse 3 says, "And the King of Jericho sent word to Rahab saying, 'Bring out the men who have come to you who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land.'"

If you're wondering why they didn't just beat the door down, move in, search the place, and find the two spies, you might be interested to know that one of the Oriental customs of that day was that they respected a woman's house. Would be nice if that happened in the 21st century, wouldn't it? They respected her house and they would never barge in and do that, even to a woman that was called a harlot. They would not do that; they were very respectful. Rahab does a very interesting thing when they do come to the door. In verses 4-5, she lies to the king's soldiers to protect the spies. This is interesting.

Joshua 2:4: "But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, 'Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark that the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them!'" But what she had done was take the men up on the roof and hidden them in a special place underneath the stalks of flax. It tells you about that in verse 6: "But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax that she had laid in order on the roof."

After the flax stalks were pulled up at harvest time they were soaked in water for three to four weeks to separate the fiber and then they were put up on the roof to dry. And when they dried they would make linen out of that flax. That's why she had all those stalks of flax up on the top of her house, and she just hid these two men under those stalks. But she lied to the soldiers. She just outright

lied. She said, “I didn’t know who they were, they went on their way, and I believe you can catch them if you hurry up.” Her story was, yes, they came here, but I didn’t know who they were. But they were upstairs underneath the stalks of flax where she had put them.

Now, we can learn much from this. Rahab, in her limited understanding—and a lot of people are this way when they have this much faith. Isn’t it awesome that in the Hall of Faith, in Hebrews 11, Abraham is mentioned and he had this much knowledge, and therefore had this much faith; and Rahab is mentioned and she had this much knowledge and this much faith based on what she knew. Based on what she knew, she felt like she had to help God out. You ever known anybody who hasn’t walked with God very long and had to just help Him out? “God just doesn’t understand what is going on, and if I don’t do something, I don’t know what You’re going to do.” And she lied to protect the spies. Could God have protected the spies without her having to lie? If you believe that He could—I’m going to raise my hand—does anyone else in here believe that He could without her having to lie? Thank you, thank you; if you hadn’t raised your hand we would need to go back and start at square one!

A lot of people weaken this by looking at it humanistically rather than looking at it divinely through His eyes. This raises the issue to many people. There is a man who wrote a book called Situational Ethics: It’s okay to lie in certain situations; it’s okay to sin in certain situations. Well, the answer is, no, it’s not. God is in control. But remember, you can’t determine another person’s level of faith. And you can’t help a person get beyond where they already are. Based on what she knew, with her little experience and exposure to God and her little faith in Him, we can understand why she did it. I mean, I can understand it. That doesn’t mean I condone it, but it means I can understand it. The point is this, though—let’s don’t argue about that—the point is she was willing to place her own life in jeopardy to protect the spies from harm. God had prepared a place for His people, His two spies, to where they would be protected from the enemy in the largest city they would have to face, which was Jericho.

Their enemy pursued them as they left her, but God protected them. It says in verse 7: “So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan, to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate.” When we seek to possess the life that God has given to us in Christ, there will be many temptations. The enemy is everywhere, to get us out of that which He has given to us. They’ll seek to take it from us. The Jerichos in our life, the sin that we just are struggling to turn loose of, is the very thing hindering us from possessing what God says is ours. But if we just yield to Him, just cry out to Him. “Oh, God, I can’t!” You know what He’s going to say? “I never said you could, but I can and I always said I would. Come to me, come to me. I’m your refuge.”

You see, if you understand the book of Galatians that we’ve just come out of and you put these two things together and the principals that we’re learning, Jesus is our life, He is the Victor, He is the Victory. And when I say yes to Him, it’s no longer me, but it’s Him and I’m hidden in Christ who is in God. And my hiding place is in Him, yielded in His Presence. And there’s not a Jericho in the world that can defeat me. And not an enemy in the world that can take away from me what God says is mine. So God prepares a place for us to take refuge.

Let me ask you a question tonight. What is your Jericho tonight? What’s your Jericho? What is the sin that knocks you down quicker than any other sin? I know that some of you here say, “Sin? Do you mean me?” I know, I know, I understand. But I want you to think about it. What is the sin that so easily besets you? What is your Jericho that is robbing you of what God says is already yours in Christ Jesus? And if you’ll just bow before Him, you can try to overcome it until you fall over on the floor. But if you’ll just bow before Him and let Him be your victory, and then you’re going to understand what we’re talking about. Nobody can take it from you, folks; nobody can take it from you. But you can’t hold onto Jericho and God at the same time. You’re going to have to turn loose of one to hold on to the other.

God produces people to stand with us

The second thing that I want you to see in this power-packed chapter is that God produced people to stand with us. When we’re in the battle and the Jerichos are rising up on us and we’re seeking to possess what God has given to us, God has already produced people who will stand around us. Here’s that encouragement thing again; we saw a little bit of it last time. Verse 8: “Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men, ‘I know that the Lord has given you the land.’” Now that’s an interesting statement: I know! “And that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.”

Now, contrary to public opinion, Rahab, and I’ll show you in Scripture in a moment, was no longer a harlot. Rahab had been brought to God. God had brought her to himself and changed her life. The reason she’s referred to as Rahab the harlot was, in all the history things I read, that once you had that label it would stick with you. And so to reference somebody, if that’s what she had been, then that’s usually what they would label her with whether she still was or not, and that’s where that comes from. God had revealed Himself to her and had changed her life. Now, she knew that the land in which she lived was not her land. She knew that. God had revealed that. God had given this land to Israel.

Joshua 2:9: “I know that the Lord has given you this land [and look at this], and that the terror of you has fallen on us and that all the

inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.” Now, one of the things that a spy would want to know is the morale of the enemy. Just how confident are they? Just how victorious do they feel? Just how strong do they think that they are? Well, what Rahab does here is disarm any fears. She said the people have already been melted in their heart. They already understand about your God. To me this is so profound and I hope it is to you, but it is to me. God had shown Himself so strong to Israel that it had melted the hearts of the pagans that inhabited the land that God said was the people’s.

I just want to throw this in: My prayer is that God will show Himself so strong in us that it will melt the hearts of people and they’ll understand the God that we serve and will bow before Him just like Rahab did and come to know Him.

She tells them what it was that had brought such fear. Verse 10: “For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea.” Isn’t it amazing? You would think that nobody would know about that! Oh, they had heard! She said, “Before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.” It says in verse 11: “When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you.” And then she says, “For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”

I want to share with you, and I contend, and I’ll contend in Scripture, that Rahab had already become a believer of God in Israel. That God had gone before the people, prepared a place, and had prepared a person that was going to stand right beside them. They had no idea that they would run into this over in Jericho. She had been prepared by God.

Now, look at the book of James for a minute. I want to show you that James uses the same words to describe Rahab that he uses to describe Abraham. Look in James 2. She comes up again, and I want you to see why I said what I said. “Wayne, why do you believe she’s been changed, why do you believe she’s no longer a prostitute?” Well, I’ll show you. James 2:24. Many people struggle with this verse, by the way. It was also said about Abraham. It says in verse 24: “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” “Well, Wayne, you just need to resign the ministry because that’s not what you believe, that’s not what you preach.” He just conflicted with the apostle Paul, didn’t he? The word justified. Folks, we’ve got to understand this. I don’t know what to do to get it across to people. The Greek is so important to unlock these things! The word “justified” is the word *dikaioo*. When you see those two little o’s at the end of a verb, it is always significant. It means this: No, they were not justified. See those two little o’s at the end of that Greek word? That’s very, very significant. Most of them don’t have that. When that is there, it doesn’t mean that works justified them; it means that they were put on display by their works, that they have already been justified. Do you see the difference? It’s not that works justified them before God, but it did justify them before men, because it proved the fact that something happened in their life. And it’s the same exact thing it says about Abraham. And we know that verse: That Abraham believed and it was accounted unto him as righteousness. So you cannot mix the two. You have to understand the difference in the two.

Now, look what it says in verse 25, now that you have that understanding, we’re proven to be justified back here with the works, we’re proven before men by the works. It says in verse 25: “In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot [listen now, watch carefully] also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?” Rahab’s protection of the spies; Rahab’s willingness to put her own life on the line; Rahab’s choice to do what she did, proved that something had happened in her life. In her protecting the spies, it put her on display as somebody who has already been justified.

The beautiful message of God’s grace that extends to the lowest of sinners is beautifully pictured right here. The most beautiful picture of salvation; it’s so beautiful that she is placed into the genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ! Does that grab you? I tell you what, if you’re here tonight and you don’t know Jesus Christ, I want to tell you something. Understand from Scripture that He loves every man, every woman that’s on this earth. There’s nothing a person can do that would make God not love them and have a purpose for their life. Matthew 1:5 it says in the genealogy of Jesus: “Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth; and Obed the father of Jesse.” And then you follow it right on down to the line of David and right on down to Christ.

Rahab wants her family to be spared, obviously, so she makes a plea to these men, these Israelite spies. She makes a plea to them that when they come across Jordan to take the land that they would spare her family. It says in Joshua 2:12, “Now therefore, please swear to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you will also deal kindly with my father’s household, and give me a pledge of truth, and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.” So the men agreed, but they give a stipulation, verse 14: “So the men said to her, ‘Our life is yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.’” God was working in so many people’s lives. The spies didn’t know that they were being followed, but God was already taking care of them. He saved a former prostitute to be the person to take her stand beside them. He provided them a place of refuge.

I just want you to know that when we possess the life that we have in Christ, we must realize that as we choose to die to self, Christ is way ahead of us. The temptations and battles begin at that moment. He will always be our refuge. I just love that. I can run to Him and say, “Oh, God! I can’t. I can’t handle this particular sin in my life and it’s eating my lunch!” And every time I confess it I get up and it eats my mind up all day long: “Oh, God! What can I do?” And God says, “You come to Me and you yield to Me and you watch what I want to do in you.” And when those temptations come, and they will, and the attacks come on our life that we have in Christ,

He always puts the right people in the right place to stand beside us and to encourage us. Isn't it incredible? It's incredible!

In Pennsylvania years ago we went out to a park. I thought I was really brave in the ministry and we were sharing the gospel in a park that was known to be a drug park. And we fanned out, you know, we trained our kids for six months, and that did a whole lot of good. We sent them out by two's and I was the odd man left out. I had to go by myself. When I walked out into the middle of that park and I saw some of the drug heads and things that were going on in that park, I thought, "Oh, my goodness." I looked around for the strength from my people. And they were gone! Those kids ran! They got out of there like a covey of quail! And here I am by myself, and I was trying to talk to this one guy who was so far out on drugs that he couldn't understand what world he was in much less what I was saying. So I retreated. And I went back to the MacDonald's that was over there. MacDonald's seemed to be a safe place and I went in there. I went over to the booth and sat down. All of our kids had come in and gathered around different places and I'm sitting there thinking, "Man, this was a defeat and a half! God, where are the people who are supposed to stand with us?"

As I was sitting there, I heard a guy praying behind me. I didn't know who he was but it caught my attention. I eased around and he had a guy's hand in his hand and he was praying. The guy was praying to receive Christ. In the booth behind me! I looked over at the other booth and there was a person who had an open Bible sharing Christ with somebody. This was not our group. I looked over here and there was another one! That place was full of Christians! And here we were, scared to death, and just by the fact that those people were there, and the strength that they display, it became encouragement to our group and buddy, they regrouped and went right back out into the park! We're not by ourselves! God is always ahead of us! He's always got the right people to put in your life at the right time to help you to go on and claim the victory over the Jericho that's in your life.

The apostle Paul found that out. When the church of Corinth was born, it says in Acts 18:9, "And the Lord said to Paul in a night vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer.'" Can you imagine the apostle Paul being afraid of anything? He says, "Don't be afraid any longer but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you and no man will attack you in order to harden you, for I have many people in this city." I love that! What he says is, "Son, you go on and do what I tell you to do. I've got enough people to stand beside you and help you walk in the victory I want you to have."

It blesses me to know that God is way ahead of us. Doesn't it bless you? He's way ahead of us! He goes in front of us as we seek to possess whatever it is that God wants for us. I want to promise you that He's got a place of refuge as we continue to run to Him, and there are plenty of people in this place that will stand beside us, lock arms, and we'll walk into victory together.

He provides a pathway for us to escape

He prepares a place of refuge, He produces a people to stand with us, and the final thing is this: He provides a pathway for us to escape. A pathway. He gives us a way of escape. When we're facing the Jerichos of our life, there is a way of escape. It's so marvelous to me that God led them to a house of a recently saved woman that—listen to this—that was on the wall of the city. How neat is that! Awesome. Verse 15, "Then she let them down by a rope through a window, for her house was on the city wall."

"Surely, Wayne, that's a coincidence." No. You know what a coincidence is, don't you? That's when God is acting anonymously. Her house was on a city wall so that she was living on the wall. What a better place to be! I mean, if you had to get out of town, you don't want to go four blocks and be covered up by a blanket and somehow try to get over the wall. She's on the wall! Verse 16: "She said to them, 'Go to the hill country so that the pursuers will not happen upon you and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterwards you may go on your way.'" You see, there was a range of white limestone hills that extended to the north and rose to a height of 1500 feet and it was filled with caves: a perfect place for them to hide while the enemy was looking for them.

The men recited to her again the conditions that, if her family was to be spared, had to be met. Verse 17: "The men said to her, 'We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, unless when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down and gather to yourself into the house your father, and your mother, and your brothers, and all of your father's household.'" Most people refer to that scarlet thread, that scarlet rope that goes all the way from Genesis to Revelation, as the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It covers us and protects us. It's pictured when they came out of Egypt and they put the blood of the lamb on both sides of the door post, and the death angel came on the eerie night and they had eaten of the lamb and put its blood upon the door. And as it went down the street, they were protected by the scarlet thread that runs all the way through, of redemption. It protected them.

They said, "You put that cord down that window, you let it hang from that window so we'll know which room is yours." It was a way of escape. Not only was there a way of escape for the spies, but also for the whole family of Rahab, and that would be through the scarlet thread that she would hang out of her window. The men continue to say, "It shall come about that if anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his head." Don't go outside! "And we shall be free. But if anyone is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him." In other words, stay in the house and hang that scarlet thread in the window. But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear.

She said in Joshua 2:21-23: “According to your words, so be it.’ So she sent them away and they departed and they tied the scarlet cord in the window. They departed and came to the hill country and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought them all along the road but had not found them. Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun and they related to him all that had happened to them.”

What a story they had to tell to Joshua! “Joshua, man, those people over there, their hearts have completely melted! They’ve already heard about what God’s done for us! That land is ours! Joshua, do you know what we’re telling you, son?” Can’t you just see him getting excited? Just excited? And they said to Joshua, “Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands. Moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away.”

The strength and the testimony of those who have been where others are seeking to go. I want you to know, folks, it’s not bad to get old, because there’s a lot of older folks who have walked down that road and they have been where many of us are wanting to go. I want to tell you something: Always listen to somebody who has been where you want to go. Always listen to the strength of a testimony of somebody who has been over and claimed the life that God has given to them, because they’re the ones who encourage us. That’s what’s happening right here. They’ve been there.

When we possess what is ours, He will prepare a place of refuge. Now He will become our place of refuge, to protect us and hide us in Himself as we say yes to Him. He’ll raise up people that will come at the right time and the right place and say exactly the right things to help us stay on the track. We don’t even know them sometimes. They’ll just be the voice of encouragement right when we need it. But not only that, but He’ll provide a path and a way for us to escape.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “There is no temptation that takes you but such as is common to man.” And every one of them, in my own words here, He gives us a way of escape. Not to get out from under it, but to be able to endure it! That’s the bottom line: Not from it, but as we walk through it. We’ll come back to what I said earlier: If you’re walking in that life right now, we need you desperately, because we need others to hear from you what it’s like over there. When you possess what is yours, that’s the strength of the testimony of people that have claimed what is rightfully theirs. We need that. What’s your Jericho tonight? What is standing in your way right now? It’s just standing there discouraging you.

Roy Hession was in my house years ago. He said something to me that turned the key for me and helps me understand Joshua as well as I understand my own life. He said, “Brother Wayne, victory is never you overcoming sin. Victory is Jesus overcoming you. He’s your refuge.” He’s already produced the people around you. Look at them; they’ve been there.

But not only that, but He’s given you a way of escape. Just say yes to Him and you can walk right through it. We learn a lot from Israel. What’s your Jericho tonight? That’s the only thing keeping you from possessing what God says is yours. What is the sin that does so easily beset your life?

Joshua 3

Our God Who is always with us

It’s good to see you today, and it’s exciting to see what God is doing in our midst. Turn if you will to Joshua 3, and you can just sort of camp out there. We’re not going to be there much. I just want to tell you one thing about that: the ten times in Joshua 3 the word Ark is used. And that’s all I’m going to say about chapter 3 today. I want to talk to you today about the God, our God, who is always with us.

Last week we saw our God who goes before us, but today we want to understand our God is always with us. Isn’t it great that He’s omnipresent? He lives within us and yet He goes before us. He’s always present with us. He’s here this morning. This is not where He dwells, in this building, He lives in us.

It’s so exciting to know that as we possess by faith what God has given to us, that He’s already gone before us. Just as a bit of review from last week, Jericho was the first major battle that the Israelites would have to fight once they crossed over the Jordan River. The Jordan River stood between them and what God said was theirs. It was at flood stage. It was a perfect time to trust Him, but Jericho blocked the way to possessing everything that God had. It was the biggest city, the biggest battle that they would face. So Joshua, who had been there 40 years before as one of the spies, he sent two secret spies over there to swim that swollen Jordan River, and they had to go in and check out Jericho. You see, it’s been a long time since Joshua had been there. He wanted to make sure; he checked the city out to see what had changed.

Well, the encouragement came with the spies because God is not a respecter of persons. Just like He watched after them, He’s going to watch after the nation of Israel. They did not know that when they got over into the land their presence would be known, even though they went secretly into the land. But God already knew that, and God was way ahead of them and had given them a place to hide when the enemy came. And it was in the home of a former prostitute by the name of Rahab. It’s interesting, as we

brought out last week, that in our possessing what is ours in Christ, we have to also deal with our Jericho. That's the biggest battle we're going to have. That's our besetting sin in our life. But when the temptation comes to go back to that sin and lose out on experiencing what God has given us, to resort back to the flesh. He doesn't give us a place to hide, He is our place to hide. He is our refuge. When we cry out to Him and say, "Oh, God! I can't handle this. This temptation is too great," God says, "I know you can't. I never said you could. I live in you and I always said I would." And He replaces us and so you see the parallel here. He gave them a place to hide, but He is our place in the New Covenant in which we hide. We're hidden in Christ who is in God.

God also prepares a people to stand with us when those temptations come, when the enemy comes and tries to get us out of experiencing what God has given to us. He prepared Rahab to help them in their journey; the former harlot. You see, God had drawn her to Himself. She was no longer a prostitute, she was something else now. And God had drawn her to Himself and changed her life. He had prepared her to stand beside His people. She hid the two spies and she helped them to escape. God is always ahead of us, and that is so precious to me. There are some people who don't want to receive Christ. Or perhaps if they have received Him, they don't know what to expect next. You don't have to know what to expect next; God knows what to expect and He's way ahead of you. And as we say yes to Him, He leads us in the journey and then also walks with us through the temptations that come.

But God also always prepares a way of escape. When the two spies needed to get away, Rahab, who lived—and I just think this is the neatest thing—lived on the wall. What a better place to live to get rid of two spies when they wanted to get out of town. She just let them out the window and down the wall and she gave them a way of escape. She made them promise, however, to spare her and her family. When they came in to take the land, they gave her a stipulation: you stay in your house on the wall and you put out the window a scarlet thread or rope. We see that that scarlet thread is the scarlet thread of redemption that runs from Genesis all the way through to Revelation. We saw that last week as we looked at the example of when they were in Egypt, and the death angel came and they partook of the lamb and put the blood on the door and that scarlet thread was protecting them once more.

Now, knowing what happened to the wall, some of you read ahead of us and already know the story, and you're thinking, "You know, that's not a good place to stay. The walls are going to come tumbling down." Well, if they're going to come tumbling down, then why would they tell her to stay in the house? An archaeologist whom I love and respect very much, and to me is a brilliant student of God's Word, told me that they have discovered—and I think this is so neat—they have discovered a part of the wall that didn't fall, and on the other side of that wall was a house. I just wonder where the scarlet thread is. They haven't dug enough yet! It's there somewhere. No wonder! It's just awesome.

And you'll get over to chapter 6 and you're going to find out that they put her outside the camp and the walls fell, and then they said she dwelled in the midst of the camp for the rest of her days. I wonder what changed. I guarantee when they saw that house sitting there they said, "Come on in!" God put His stamp of approval on her.

Well, in our walk with Christ, our yielding to Him is still that scarlet thread of redemption, isn't it? Our way of escape is to run to Him and be covered by His blood and cleansed. And even when we make a mistake and even when we sin, His blood cleanses us. And it's just such a beautiful picture of what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, today we're going to see that He just doesn't go before us, He goes with us. It is His presence with us that assures our heart as we possess that which He has given us by faith. Now when you mention the word "Ark," you're talking about the presence of God with His people. We're speaking of the Ark of the Covenant. And like I said earlier, the word ark is used ten times in chapter 3, and it just hit me, a lot of people may not understand the Ark and what it represented to you and me in the New Covenant. What Israel didn't understand, and it's our prayer today that they would, is that the Ark of the Covenant was a perfect picture, a shadow, of the Christ that lives and dwells permanently in us. They were carrying with them a symbol of the presence of God with them. And it's going to be so exciting when we get into chapter 3 and how far they had to back away from that Ark to be sure that everybody could see that Ark at all times. And how, when they got to the swollen river of the Jordan, the priests had that Ark with them and they put their feet in the water. And what happened to that water when they did, in the presence of God, that's always with us.

If you want to know this morning what it is that Christ offers to you, that He wants you to experience, I promise you, the picture is right here in the Ark. Everything about the Ark is a replica and a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I want us to look at the Ark this morning. Four things I want you to see and I want you to know that Christ lives in you. He is our Ark; in a sense He's with us within us! We're kind of like that Ark, but He's within us and we want to understand what it is He wants to do for us as we learn to walk by faith in the life He's given to us.

The Ark portrays the person of Christ who is always with us

Four things, first of all is this about the Ark of the Covenant: the Ark portrays the person of Christ who is always with us. It portrays beautifully the person of Christ who is always with us. It's in the Ark that we see the God-Man. Now if you can flip fast enough, we're going to be looking at a lot of Scripture or you can just listen. I'm going to read them for you, but in Exodus 25:10-11, it says this: "They shall construct an Ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide and one and a half cubits high. You shall overlay it with pure gold inside and out you shall overlay it, and you shall make a gold molding around it."

Now this acacia wood, sometimes called shittim wood, came from a large, thorny tree that had rough, gnarled bark. It was very hard. It was orange-brown wood and it was very hard grain, kind of like in a petrified forest, you know, when you see the wood it has

almost become impenetrable. In fact, the Septuagint translates the word there as “incorruptible.” Now, this wood, made of a specific wood, pictures the humanity of Christ. He became the son of man. But this hard wood was to be covered outwardly and it was to be inlaid inwardly with pure gold. It says in Exodus 25:11, “And you shall overlay it with pure gold within and without.”

Now the picture is complete. Here we see the beautiful picture of the humanity of Christ, but yet the divinity of Christ. You see, Christ, our Lord Jesus, was both man and God, and this is the uniqueness about Him. He was the God-Man. He was God in the flesh. First John 4:2 says, “By this you know the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”

The Ark was also surrounded by a crown of solid gold. And that’s just another picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man crowned Him with thorns, but God has crowned Him with glory and honor and set Him at His right side. Hebrews 2:9 says, “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor so that by the grace of God, He might taste death for everyone.”

At each corner of the Ark there was a gold ring; two on each side. And these gold rings were used for the staves to go through to carry the Ark. There was no beginning and no end to that ring, which teaches us that the Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And those staves that they would use that were fixed to the Ark through those four rings, those staves remind us of His Word, when He says in Hebrews 13:5, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” He is ever present with you and me. And this is a beautiful thing: the Ark could be taken from them, and it was symbolic of the presence of God. But you and I have Him within us. We have been made priests unto God in Christ Jesus. He is our High Priest. And we don’t have to have staves to carry Him and there is no fear of losing Him: He lives within us and is always with us.

I had a young man in Chattanooga and I knew him to this day, but he did some crazy things. And you know how young men are. My son’s one, and I used to be one. You wear these dumb clothes. I mean, you can tell a young man in a crowd of 2,000 people. It’s just the way they look. And he had this dumb looking hat on, you know, and walked into church one day and this precious little lady walked up to him and she said, “Young man, get that hat off your head! You’re in God’s house!” And he looked at her for a minute and he said, “I beg your pardon. This hat is not IN God’s house; this hat is ON God’s house!” And kept right on walking! Now he wasn’t very tactful, but he had a truth, didn’t he?

You know, we call this the house of God, only in the sense that we have set it apart to worship Him. We are the house of God. That’s what 1 Corinthians tells us, “Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God.” We don’t need staves to carry Him around. He’s within us, and everywhere we go we carry Him around. He lives in our lives.

So the Ark points to our ascended Lord as Son of God and Son of man: crowned with glory, ever living and ever present to all who call upon Him. The Ark represented to the Israelites the presence of God, but to us in the New Covenant, built on better promises, it is a picture of Christ who lives in our lives and seeks to want to live His life through us. Our little grandson tells his Mama every night. He says, “Mama, if you need me, you come get me!” I just love that: he’s got such a sweet heart. In little Jonathan’s mind he’s telling her, “I’m just upstairs, Mama, and you’re just downstairs, but if you need me, you come on up and get me.” And I’m thinking that’s not the way it is with Christ, is it? We don’t have to go anywhere to get Him; we already have Him. And all you have to do is cry out to Him. He is there. He lives in us.

The Ark proclaims our provision in Christ that is always with us

So the Ark beautifully portrays the Person of Christ who is always with us in the presence of His Spirit. Once we become a believer, we carry Him wherever we go. But then secondly, the Ark proclaims our provision in Christ that is always with us. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that within the Ark of the Covenant was the golden jar holding the manna. Hebrews 9:4, “Having a golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant covered on all sides with gold in which were a golden jar holding the manna.”

Now in Exodus 16:33-34, it says in verse 33, “Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omerful of manna in it and place it before the Lord to be kept throughout your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses,” verse 34 says, “so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept.” Now this manna, which in Hebrew means “what is it,” in the Chaldean means “a portion,” and in the English means “bread,” this manna was God’s miraculous and bountiful provision for Israel. It was what He gave to them to sustain them. In Exodus 16:11-31, and Numbers 11:1-9, as carefully studied, you will note that in every detail, this pictures the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life. In fact, the Lord Jesus likened Himself to manna to His own person in John 6:35. Jesus said to them, “I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”

And as we begin to look at what this manna does, and what He wants to do in our life, from the description given us in Exodus 16:14, we learn that it was small. It was small. In fact, some translations translate “small,” but the New American Standard says “when the layer of dew evaporated, behold on the surface of the wilderness, there was a fine [or small] flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground.” Now the smallness of this manna, and yet its sustaining power would point to the humility of our Lord Jesus

Christ. Christ our bread, our manna, made Himself of no reputation. In the eyes of men He made Himself small. Philippians 2:7, in the King James Version says, "But made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men." Something that the world considers to be so trite is so profound.

The Scripture tells us that the manna was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. In Exodus 16:14, "When the layer of dew evaporated, behold on the surface of the wilderness, there was a fine, flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground." That word "frost" is sometimes translated hoar frost and it referred to an extreme frost. Oh, how awesome it is to get up in that fall, in the morning, and I just love it, and when that frost has been laid on the ground. You just want to breathe this fresh: it is fresh! You see, this aspect of the manna would speak of the freshness of Christ. You go to Him every day and every moment and you're going to discover something so fresh about Him. There's nothing stale in the Lord Jesus if we experience His life. In John 6:63, "It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing." "The words," Jesus says, "that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life." They are like the frost in the morning, they're fresh and they're so refreshing in your life.

In Exodus 16:31 it says, "The house of Israel named it manna." And it gives is another dimension. It says, "And it was like coriander seed." Coriander seed was used as a spice and this would speak of the fragrance of Christ. Believers were spoken of when they lived yielded to Christ in the New Testament as exuding the fragrance of Christ. There's just a sweet-smelling aroma, spiritually, when people are walking with God. The Song of Solomon 1:3 says, "Your oils have a pleasing fragrance. Your name is like purified oil." In Numbers 11:8 it says something else about this manna that represents the Lord Jesus, the Bread of Life. It says that its taste "was as the taste of cakes baked with oil." That oil being that ingredient that gave it that sustenance and its flavor.

In Numbers 11:8, "The people would go about and gather it and grind it between two millstones or beat it in the mortar and boil it in the pot and make cakes with it, and its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil." You know that the oil is a picture of the authority of Christ, the Anointed One. John 3:34 says, "Now He whom God has sent speaks the Words of God for He gives the Spirit without measure."

I've had many people pray for me from time to time, "Oh, God! Anoint him, put the anointing upon him." But to me that's the wrong prayer. Jesus is the anointed one. Jesus is the Anointing. And when it's no longer me, but it's Him, that anointing is present in my life and in yours. And it's the authority which that anointing gives who is His presence within us that is incredible.

In Exodus 16:31 it says, "Its taste," speaking of the manna again, "is like the wafers with honey." And this speaks of the sweetness of Christ. I love that verse in Romans 2 that says it's the goodness and the kindness of Christ that leads a man to repentance. Song of Solomon 2:3 prophetically says, "I sat down under his shadow and with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste." In Numbers 11:7 it says, "Now the manna was like coriander seed and its appearance like that of bdellium." Bdellium was thought to be by many the beryl crystal, which is a precious stone, and this would speak of the preciousness of Christ. Peter says in the King James Version, 1 Peter 2:7, "Unto you therefore," speaking to the believers, "which believe, He is precious." I wonder how many times during the week do you stop and tears begin to fill up in your eyes as you think of the preciousness of Christ? The sweetness of Christ, the awesome fragrance of being in His presence; the refreshment of just being in His presence and allowing Him to be in you what you know that you cannot be.

This manna was a sufficient provision. It fed the people for 40 years and kept them going for that period of time. The bread of heaven was plenty for everyone. This manna was a satisfying provision. Some Jewish authorities tell us that it tasted to every man as he pleased. In other words, it suited every palate, whether it was young, whether it was old, weak or strong, a truly remarkable fact when you realize that we're talking about 1.5-2.5 million people. And every single person was not only sustained, but was satisfied. This manna was a sustaining provision. The nutrition in this bread from heaven evidently contained all the vitamins that were needed for it maintained the strength of this pilgrim nation for those forty years of the wilderness wandering.

So what we're seeing here is a picture in that Ark, in that chest, covered with gold, inside a golden pot of manna. And that manna is telling us of the beautiful characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you begin to possess His life, you'll discover that it is very sufficient, it is satisfying and it is sustaining. The Ark portrays the Person of Christ, but it also proclaims our provision that's in Christ. We're living in a day when it's everything but Jesus—give me anything, but don't give me Jesus. But yet in Jesus is everything everybody needs, and if they'd just come to Him and taste of Him and receive that which He gives to them they would discover.

The Ark portrays the productivity of Christ

The Ark pictures, thirdly, the productivity of Christ. He reproduces Himself in us. Not only was there the golden jar of manna inside that chest that was covered with gold, but there was also something else. He says, "In which was a golden jar holding the manna, and," he adds, "Aaron's rod which budded." Now this rod was an emblem, or this stick, was an emblem of the priesthood, the chosen priesthood: God's chosen priesthood. The circumstances in which it budded are found and recorded in Numbers 16 and 17. There was a man there by the name of Korah. Korah didn't understand the function of God. Just like many people don't understand it when you have elders, they all look at each other and say the priesthood of believers. We're all equal. He couldn't understand why it was

that they had to listen to Moses and listen to Aaron. And so he rebelled against the priesthood of Aaron and the leadership of Moses.

So God had to judge those rebels and then He had to vindicate His authority and His ministry of His chosen servants. So a rod, a stick, which was a tribal staff; it came from a tree somewhere, but it was a tribal staff, suitably named, was taken from each of the 12 tribes. Each one of them had a stick that could have produced, but had been cut off and used as a symbol. They laid it before Jehovah inside the Holy of Holies. Now among these was Aaron's rod, representing not only him but the whole tribe of Levi. Now here then were 12 sticks, each stick representing one of the 12 tribes of Israel. They were dead and they were barren. They could produce no fruit and they were laid before God overnight.

What God was going to do was to vindicate one of those sticks, which meant He was going to give authority back to His priesthood that had been rebelled against by Korah. After laying overnight, Moses went into the tent the next morning, in Numbers 17:8 it says, "Now on the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony and behold the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi," now listen to this, "had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms and it bore ripe almonds." Now what rich teaching is enshrined here in this stick, this rod, that budded, blossomed and brought forth almonds.

There are three levels here of what God does; it pictures our Lord Jesus Christ. In the rod we have a picture of the Savior's incarnation. When He became a man, not came into a man, but when He became a man, He was as a root out of dry ground, Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 53:2. Later on we read that He was "cut off" out of the land of the living, speaking of His crucifixion in Isaiah 53:8. And so we see that in the first part of that. But the buds speak of His resurrection. The rod that budded, having died for our sins, the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and that's specifically stated in 1 Corinthians 15:4. In the truest sense, Christ is the only one, Old Testament and New Testament, that ever truly rose from the dead.

Now you say, "Wait a minute Wayne. I can tell you many people." Now, wait a minute. Both in the Old and New Testament, yes, men and women were brought back to life to live again, but then they had to also do something else again. What was it? They had to die again. F. B. Meyer pointedly remarks that in every case of somebody being brought back to life, there was one cradle and two coffins, in every one. So in that understanding of that, Jesus is the only one ever to resurrect truly from the dead. In Romans 6:10, "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all. But the life that He lives, He lives unto God." And the preceding verse, verse 9 says, "Knowing that Christ having been raised from the dead is never to die again. Death no longer is master over Him." So in the budding there we see the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But in the blossom, in the blossom, it not only budded and blossomed and then bore fruit. In the blossom we see Christ's exaltation, for the flower is always the glory of the tree. After His resurrection we read that He was received up into glory, 1 Timothy 3:16. Now the almonds typify the next step, His reproduction of His life into others. You see, it wasn't just that He budded and blossomed, but it was that He bore fruit. It was a stick from an almond tree and so He bore the fruit. The almonds typify this. The manifestation of life is beauty and the purpose of all beauty, all throughout fair creation, is the reproduction of life for the maintenance of succeeding generations.

And so that last step shows His seed that He's going to produce, that which He's going to bring forth because of what He's done. So we see the fruit of the almonds, our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven reproducing His life in every sinner who repents and believes. Isaiah tells us that having made His soul an offering for sin, one day He would see His offspring. He would see that which was reproduced because of what He had done. Isaiah 53:10: "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief. If He would render Himself as a guilt offering He would see His offspring," He would see His offspring, "He will prolong His days and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand."

So the risen Christ has a seed and one day He will present that precious fruit. As Hebrews tells us in chapter 2, verse 13, "Behold I and the children whom God has given Me." Aren't you glad to be a part of that reproduction, part of that almond, part of the reproduction of the Lord Jesus, His life that's been reproduced in us? The psalmist also tells us in chapter 22 and verse 30, "Posterity will serve Him." Or, His seed will serve Him, posterity. "It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation."

So in the Ark we have a symbol of the presence of God, but to us it's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the life that we can possess. We see the person of Christ, we see the provision of Christ, and we see the productivity of Christ as He reproduces Himself in the lives of others. Last Sunday a young man came out and he was just so beaming in his face and the person with him said, "Wayne, I'd for you to meet your new brother in Jesus Christ." He had just received Jesus after the service last week. Isn't that exciting? And we're all a part of that. And because He lives in us, He continues to produce His seed in the lives of others and one day will present them back to the Father.

The Ark proclaims the propitiation of Christ

And then finally, the Ark proclaims the propitiation of Christ that is always with us. That's a big word, propitiation. We throw it around sometimes as if everybody understands it. It's found in Hebrews 2:17, "Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in all things so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God; to make propitiation for the sins of the

people." Now that word "propitiation" means to bring forgiveness to those who don't deserve it by the means of a costly and an atoning sacrifice. He satisfied the justice of God; He satisfied the love of God. When He died, he satisfied the love of God; when He shed His blood, He satisfied the justice of God: He paid our sin debt. Jesus' death satisfied God. His dying for our sin and His shedding of His blood, frees us from the penalty of sin when we receive Him by faith, and then daily frees us from the power of sin, and one day will free us from the very presence of sin as He takes us to be with Himself and we have a brand new body.

In the Ark was also the Tables of the Covenant. Now, to see this propitiation, you've got to understand how man is condemned and yet how man now can be saved. Hebrews 9:4 "Having an altar of incense in the Ark of the Covenant in which was a golden jar holding the manna," we looked at that, "and Aaron's rod which budded," we looked at that, "and the Tables of the Covenant." The Tables of the Covenant. The instruction to Moses was in Exodus 25:16, "You shall put into the Ark the testimony which I shall give you." Now the Testimony was a moral law: the Ten Commandments that everybody wants to talk about, but nobody can live. They're explained in detail in Exodus 20:1-17; the law again that no man or woman can keep and therefore condemned all. And this law, this law, was deposited in the Ark.

Now you think about that for a second. Those who say that you can lose your salvation once you receive Christ in your heart would jump on that and say, "You see that? That law is still there and it's still there condemning even the ones who carry it with them wherever they go." But no, you don't know the rest of the story. I love Paul Harvey. Paul Harvey says, "Now, for the rest of the story." I just love him. I just think that's the greatest line.

Let me tell you the rest of the story. Oh, yes, they were in the Ark. The two tables were in the Ark, but there was something above them and it sealed the Ark. And it covered over, where you couldn't see the condemnation of the tables of law. You know what that was? That was the Mercy Seat: the Mercy Seat. The Mercy Seat pictures our Lord Jesus Christ who became for us the propitiation of our sin, the one, the only one who could, and the only one who did live the whole law. In fact, you hear His voice prophetically in Psalm 40:7, "Then I said, 'Behold I come. In the scroll of the book it is written of Me.'" In verse 8, "I delight to do your will, oh God. Your law is within my heart."

When Christ appeared in the flesh He could say in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I came to abolish the law in any way, or the prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." He came to fulfill the law. How? As a man. The law, the tables of stone that condemned every person born of Adam, but He came as the God-man born of the virgin Mary and as a result of that lived perfectly. He dotted every i, crossed every t, therefore He could qualify to go to the cross and take our sin debt upon Himself. The perfect Sacrifice. The apostle Paul reminds us that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, in Romans 10:4.

Hovering over the Mercy Seat, you've got to get this picture: the top of that chest covered with gold, crowned with gold, is the Mercy Seat. But at each end of the Ark, and hovering over it were two marvelous, enormous angels. As a matter of fact, they were so big it almost overshadowed the Ark. And these were the cherubim. They were formed out of the gold. They weren't formed and then added to it, welded to it, they were formed out of the gold. It's a beautiful thing if you've ever seen a picture of it. Their wings were spread upward, and they faced one another in the sense of there was one at one end and one at the other end, and their wings came up and they're hovering over the Mercy Seat.

Their faces, however, were turned toward the Mercy Seat. You see, angels don't understand redemption; they've never had to be redeemed. They have to look upon what God does in our life with absolute interest. I'm sure they're hovering this morning because whenever He is worshipped, they're always present. Hello, fellows! They're always here. They're always here. And they look with intent; they look with intent upon those who say they are the redeemed of the Lord Jesus Christ. The cherubim seem to be throughout all of Scripture, shouting forth the glorious power of God. It was here, between the two cherubim that the voice of God spoke to Moses, in Numbers 7:89. Over and over God is mentioned. I found it so many times I didn't write the references down. That God is mentioned as the Lord of Hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim. It was here on the Mercy Seat on the Day of Atonement, that the high priest would put the blood of atonement upon the Mercy Seat.

Let me give you a picture of this. I tell you, this is sobering. He would tie a rope around his leg, because if he got inside there and he died of a heart attack, nobody could rush into the presence of God and get him. Sin in their life would have immediately taken them away. The veil that was ripped, by the way, from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross, the veil was so thick and so heavy and well-constructed that two oxen pulling against it could not pull it apart. And he would go behind that veil with that rope tied on his ankle in case something happened to him. And when he went in, the only way he could get in was because he had a vase and in that was the blood of the sacrifice. And when he went in, he wasn't just making atonement for the sins of the people; he was making atonement for himself, because he was nowhere close to being the priest that our Lord Jesus was. Jesus did not go to the cross for His sin; He went to the cross of our sin.

But every year he would come in. He would dip into that and he would sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat which hovered over the law that condemned every man. And when the blood touched the Mercy Seat, that's where men could find mercy with God and their sins which were underneath that were covered for one more year. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ is our propitiation. He's our Mercy

Seat. It was His blood that doesn't cover our sins for one year, it remits them forever. Without the shedding of blood, Hebrews says, there would be no remission of sin. And so we see the picture in the Ark of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even today, or yesterday, when we sin and we run to Him because He's ever present, we don't run anywhere, He's right there. We turn to Him, that's a better way of saying it. We turn to Him and when we turn to Him we admit our sin and immediately that which could have condemned us cannot condemn us because His blood has cleansed us and will cleanse us again and keep us clean until one day we're with Him. He is our Mercy Seat. Where the blood of the sacrifice covered the sins of Israel, the blood of our Lord Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice, covers and remits our sins forever. Jesus Christ is our Mercy Seat.

So in the Ark we clearly see the person of Christ, we see the provision of Christ in the manna, we see the productivity of Christ in the budding rod of Aaron, and we see the propitiation of Christ not only in the Tables of Law, but in the Mercy Seat that covers it with the cherubim that are overseeing and looking in with interest at what happens there at that place. And here is our life that we have in Christ.

A very precious gentleman shared with me this morning coming in, he said, "You know, it's not just talking about what we have, is it? It's experiencing it for ourselves. That's the journey, isn't it, Wayne?" I said, "That's exactly right." Are you walking in the cleansing power of the blood of Christ today? Are you walking in the satisfying, sustaining, beautiful manna of the Bread of Life? Are you feeding from Him? Is He filling up every hunger in your life and quenching every thirst for righteousness? He is our life. He has come that we might experience Him.

This is Who we're all about here. This is going to be our message until Jesus comes back. Jesus and Jesus alone. Nothing more and nothing less, just Jesus. I've read this twice since I've been your pastor and I'm going to read it a third time today, and maybe in light of what we're speaking on, perhaps today it will speak to your heart in a different way.

"Speaking of Christ, He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end. He's the keeper of creation and the Creator of all. He's the architect of the universe and the manager of all times. He always was, He always is, and He always will be: unmoved, unchanged, undefeated, and never undone. He was bruised and brought healing; He was pierced and eased pain; He was persecuted and brought freedom; He was dead and brought life; He was risen and brings power; He reigns and brings peace. The world can't understand Him, the armies can't defeat Him, the schools can't explain Him, and the leaders can't ignore Him. Herod couldn't kill Him, the Pharisees couldn't confuse Him, and the people couldn't hold Him. Nero couldn't crush Him, Hitler couldn't silence Him, the new age can't replace Him, and the talk show hosts can't explain Him away.

He is light, love, longevity, and Lord. He is goodness, kindness, gentleness, and God. He is holy, righteous, mighty, powerful and pure. His ways are right, His words are eternal. His will is unchanging and His mind is on me. He is my redeemer, He is my Savior, He is my guide and He is my peace. He is my joy, He is my comfort, He is my Lord and He rules my life. I serve Him because His bond is love, His burden is light. His goal for me is abundant life. I follow Him because He's the wisdom of the wise, the power of the powerful, the ancient of days, the ruler of rulers, the leader of leaders, the overseer of the over-comers, and the sovereign Lord of all that was, and is, and is to come.

And if that seems impressive to you, try this on for size: His goal is a relationship with me. He'll never leave me, never forsake me, never mislead me, never forget me, never overlook me and never cancel my appointment in His appointment book. When I fall, He lifts me up; when I fail, He forgives; when I'm weak He is strong when I'm lost He is the way. When I'm afraid, He is my courage. When I stumble He steadies me. When I'm hurt, He heals me. When I'm broken, He mends me. When I'm blind, He leads me. When I'm hungry, He feeds me. When I face trials, He is with me. When I face persecution, He shields me. When I face problems, He comforts me. When I face loss, He provides for me. When I face death, He carries me home. He is everything for everybody, everywhere, every time, every way. He is God and He is faithful. I am His and He is mine. My Father in heaven can whip the father of this world. So if you're wondering why I feel so secure, understand this: He said it, that settles it. God is in control, I'm on His side, and that means all is well with my soul. Every day is a blessing for God is."

Now that's our message right there. I want you to know folks, that's what we are going to be about until Jesus comes back. We're not interested in gimmicks, you use a gimmick to get somebody, and you've got to use a gimmick to keep somebody. We're interested in the true sustenance of the Lord Jesus Christ; the substance of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's all we're going to preach, that's all we're going to talk about until He comes back, because in Him is what everybody needs and most people don't understand that. But we're going to be about that.

Now, I've said all of that to help you understand the Ark, to help you understand the life that God has given you that you can possess in Christ Jesus, totally sustaining, totally satisfying, all the things we've talked about.

Step into the water

Turn if you will to Joshua 3. How exciting can it get? Joshua 3. We're going to go over today. They're going into the water. As a matter of fact I'm entitling this "Step into the Water."

In chapter 3 of Joshua we saw the last time that the word ark is used at least ten different times in that chapter. Now the word ark to the Israelite had to do with the presence of God. They knew when they saw that ark; they understood that God was with them. However the ark to you and I, they didn't understand this, we do, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is always with us. Hebrews 13:5 says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." He's always with us. He's always with us. The ark was a chest made of acacia wood. Matter of fact, that was the hardest wood known at that time. It was called petrified wood in some translations it was so hard. And it was inlaid with gold, within and without, completely covered with pure gold. Of course this points to the God-man, the word Jesus Christ being man and His being God.

Within that chest were several things. First of all there was the golden pot of manna. Now that golden pot of manna was a picture of Jesus being the bread of life. He sustains us, He satisfies us, and He is our every sufficiency no matter what need we have in life. Inside the Ark was also Aaron's rod which budded, bloomed, and bore fruit—a picture of His resurrection, a picture of His ascension, and a picture of His power to reproduce Himself in the lives of those who trust Him by faith. Many of you have seen The Passion. I hope all of you will see it before it goes away. It is an awesome, awesome movie. But I tell you what, this is the next piece. People need to understand that, yes, He came and died; yes, He resurrected; yes, He ascended. But now He lives in heaven and wants to send His Spirit to come and live in us. He reproduces His life in the hearts of people who trust Him by faith.

Inside the Ark were also the Tablets of Law, the Ten Commandments that were given to Moses there on the Mount. Those Tablets of Law condemn every man born of Adam. And some people say, "Wayne, if this is a picture of Christ, why would those Tablets of Law be inside of that chest?" Well, the part of the picture that you don't understand perhaps is that the Tablets of Law were within the Ark, but covering those Tablets of Law and the pot of manna and the other things that were there, was the chest top, which was called the Mercy Seat. The Mercy Seat. Again, pure gold; it was covered with pure gold, and at each end of the Mercy Seat was an enormous, beautiful angel. That angel was a cherubim as we see many times in Scripture. The wings were held up and out and the faces of the angels were looking down intently at the top of that Mercy Seat which covered the Tablets of Law within the Ark. It was the Mercy Seat every year that bore special significance to Israel.

The High Priest would go in behind the veil into the Holy of Holies and he would take the blood and he would sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat which would cover the people condemned by the law underneath it. It covered them for one year. It was the blood of bulls and goats. But, you see, that could only cover them for one year. The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ does not just cover us for one year. It remits our sin as Hebrews 9:22 says: "Without the shedding of blood there would be no remission of sins." He washes them away. And so when we see the Ark, we see the law is very important to the heart of God. But we also see that the law was fulfilled by the Mercy Seat. He was our propitiation and that was translated many times in Scripture as our Mercy Seat. And the blood that He shed for us covers us and there is no condemnation therefore if we are in Christ Jesus.

What a beautiful picture the ark was and is to us of the Lord Jesus being in us and with us at all times, no matter what we face, no matter what trial we're up against. He is our sufficiency and our enablement. But not only that, any time we sin in the Christian life we run to Him and His blood that gave us the bath and salvation continues to cleanse of our sins daily and effect a fellowship with Him.

Well, in Joshua 3:1 it says, "Then Joshua rose early in the morning and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed." Now I want to keep reminding you of something, and that is that Joshua didn't have a clue how they were going to cross the water. Nowhere in Scripture does it say, "Lord, do we build a boat? Exactly how do we do this?" Because the river is at flood stage, he doesn't know. He's just acting by faith, taking a step at a time, trusting God.

Remember I said the river was at flood stage? God had created a crisis in their lives. I wonder, what crisis God has put in your life today? What flooded river faces you and everything God says is yours in Him? What is it that we're standing up against and God says "I want you to step into the water." And so by faith he moved all two and a half million Israelites. Can you imagine? Seven miles from Shittim to the banks of the Jordan River and they're ready now to step into the water—unless God has another plan, that's all they know. If we're going to cross it and He's not given us a boat, then we're going to have to step into the water.

Joshua was all the time simply trusting God to do what he knew that God has done before and could do again. He just knew it; he trusted the character of God. In verse 2: "At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp." It took three days to prepare everybody to go across. They were to walk by tribe, there was a special alignment and evidently it took three days. Now, camped beside that river swollen at flood time for three days gave everybody in Israel a chance to understand what was ahead of them. Now you can just imagine, I'm reading between the lines, I don't know, but the high anxiety that had to cause in the people's minds. I can just hear them sitting around the camp fire as they were eating at night. "Oh my, the river is at flood stage. How in the

world are we ever, oh I wish we could go back to Egypt and as they said over in the wilderness and eat the leeks and onions again. What in the world is he doing leading us to this place?"

And God had a plan. People were facing the unknown. Listen, folks, in the flooded rivers of your life, that's the unknown. When we receive Jesus into our hearts, and when we begin to turn to walk with Him, we're entering the unknown. And we walk by faith and not by sight. We don't have to see the boats, we just trust the One that's in charge. Anything over our head is under His feet. We are never alone; we are never alone. He's within us and He wants us to step into the water of His will. We must be willing. But to do that there are three things that will help us to understand and it's right here in chapter 3. That's what I want us to look at today.

The unchangeable will of God

First of all, the unchangeable will of God. I hope that you're seeing, that I'm seeing, that God has never changed. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. And what He requires if we're going to walk with Him is the same, whether in the Old Testament or whether in the New Testament. But first, the unchangeable will of God.

If we are ever going to possess—and I mean that in light of experience, we already possess it positionally—but if we're ever going to experience what God says is already ours in Christ, then we're going to have to learn to walk by faith, trusting Him and trusting His Word. And that has never changed. That's the way it is, I don't care which covenant you're in, that's exactly what God requires. The difference is He lives in us now, to enable us, and even create the desire, but it's the same.

In verse 3: "And they commanded the people saying, 'When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However [he says], there shall be between you and it a distance of about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.'" I love that about God. The new things of God; "Behold I will do a new thing," He says in Isaiah 43.

When you begin to walk with Him, we begin to experience life in ways that we've never experienced before. There were no scouts to go over first. Two others had gone over, but there were none to lead the way, only the priests carrying the ark were to put their feet into the water. God was going to lead them and His people over into that which He says is theirs. But to do that through the crisis, through the flooded river, He was going to teach them to walk by faith. In the midst of any crisis we have in life—and they can be this big and they can be huge—in any crisis in life we need to simply learn to just trust Him and only Him and He will take us where we have never been before.

Now everybody was supposed to be able to see the Ark. He said, "There shall be between you and it a distance of about two thousand cubits by measure." The ark was to be that far out in front of them so that everybody could see it. Now, 2,000 cubits is approximately 3,000 feet. It says "about" 2,000 cubits, so somewhere in the neighborhood of 3,000 feet. Three thousand feet out in front of them were the priests carrying that ark. Now why would that be? So that everybody could see it. The further back you were, the better you could see it.

He said don't get too close to it; if you get too close to it you'll not be able to see it. You know, that's exactly the way it is in our Christian walk. I thank the Lord for the man who wrote the song, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth shall grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." No matter what crisis you're walking through, it's your focus that is key. Are you looking at the lions of your circumstance, or are you looking at the Lord of your circumstance? It's got to be your focus, that's got to start. You've got to get in His presence. When you're facing the swollen rivers of the circumstances of your life, you've got to get into His presence and be able to focus upon Him and see Him.

As I said, they were not to get too close, because the closer you got, the less others could see it. You had to stay back. And then in verse 5: "Then Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.'" Consecrate yourselves. Once we're in the presence of God, once we get our focus on Him—maybe it's the death of a loved one, maybe it's a trauma at work, maybe it's a health problem—but you come in the midst of the crisis that's staring at you and what you want to do is get into His presence. And when you get into His presence, you consecrate yourself unto Him; you yield unto Him. You make sure you set yourself apart unto Him. Before they could cross the swollen river of their circumstance and enter that which God said was already theirs, they had to first of all focus on Him and consecrate themselves to Him.

The word "consecrate" means to set yourself apart unto God. It's translated "holy" seven different times in the Old Testament, it's translated "sanctify" 108 times in the Old Testament, but it means the same thing. It's the word used in chapter 7, and we're going to preempt a little bit when I tell you this, but they come in, they go to Jericho—and we'll look at that later on—but then they come to a little pipsqueak military outpost called Ai. And they're miserably defeated. Miserably defeated! "Now, God, I thought you were going to be with us?" And the reason that they were defeated is because of sin in the camp. And you see, sin is when we're not consecrated. And so God had to tell Joshua in the midst of that chapter, and you'll see it when we get there, He said, "Tell them to consecrate themselves." And consecrating themselves had to do with dealing with the sin that was in their lives. Deal with that which has caused them not to focus. Deal with that which has caused them not to be totally surrendered to Him. They had to deal with it,

or they're not going to walk in the victory God said was theirs.

It's a picture of a conduit; you know what a conduit is—a pipe. If you want water to flow through the pipe then you definitely don't want anything in it that would obstruct it. My little grandchildren have discovered the art of flushing toys down the toilet. It's a strange thing that does to the flow of the water and you want to make sure that the conduit is clear. We're a vessel, that's all we are. We're just conduits. For those who think more highly of yourselves, you ought to think as Paul said in Romans: just relax, back off, you're just a conduit. That's all. And it's all about God, it's not about us. And if Wayne wants to experience all that God has for him, it's already there, it's in Christ, then Wayne has to learn to get rid of anything in his life that is causing an obstruction in the flow. He needs to consecrate himself. But he won't do that until he gets in the presence of God, until he's looking at Christ, in His presence, will we consecrate anything.

Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." You see, hinging on the unreasonable in our minds lies the unexplainable wonders of God that we'll look at in just a moment. Miss Bertha Smith was a part of the Shantung Revival in China. One of the greatest missionaries we've ever had. And on the field she tells the story of how they had a man with them on the team that began to lose his eyesight. Well, back in the day that she was a missionary in China, they didn't have many men that would go. The women, thank God for the women, carried the load for so many years when the men wouldn't. They had a man with them, but here he was losing his eyesight. They got together and said, "We can't let him go home. If he goes home, they'll not send us another one, and we don't have anyone that can do what he does here." It was in the medical field I think. And so they got together and said, "We're going to pray for him." And they all got around him and they began to lay their hands on him, and just call out to God, to pray that He would heal the man.

But you know what God did? God said, "Now that you're in My presence, let's put the man aside here. You need to consecrate yourself here. There's sin in your life that is somehow obstructing the flow." And Miss Bertha Smith said that she couldn't believe what God put on her heart. She got alone and she said, "God, show me what it is in my life that is hindering what you want to do in our work here." God began to put on her heart promises she'd made and never fulfilled, He began to put on her heart books that she had borrowed and never returned, money that she'd borrowed and never repaid, promises she'd made and never kept, and it just went on and on and on. She said it was three weeks and brokenness that led her to consecrate herself; to get those things out of her life that were keeping the flow of God from working within her.

They said they finally came together several weeks later. When they came together, they didn't know if God would heal the man or not. It doesn't mean that God is any less of God if He didn't. But that was the need and the desire of their heart. And they cried out to God to heal this man, and they said when she started to pray with her life now cleaned up, with all the garbage out of the way, she said the power of God's Spirit was so in that place and the man's eyes were healed and he served out his whole term with them in China. But more than that, that healing of that man became the beginning of the Shantung Revival, and they didn't even have revival on their mind. They were the crisis of a flooded river; they didn't know what to do. They had to get in God's presence and they had to consecrate themselves. And God did such a work in that man's life that it started the Shangtung Revival which historically goes down as one of the greatest revivals we've ever seen.

That's what God says: What is it in our life that is holding back the flow, the flow? He lives in us, we don't have a land, we have a life. And so He says to us: "It's never going to change, it's never going to change." It's going to be get into His presence and consecrate yourselves, and become a conduit so that God can do those works through you.

The unexplainable wonders of God

Well, the unchangeable will of God, and once we get hold of that and focus on Him and consecrate ourselves to Him, the next thing we see is the unexplainable wonders of God. How do you explain when God does what He does, when we're standing there and facing the river and we put our foot into the water, how do we explain what happens next?

"Then Joshua said to the people," verse 5, "consecrate yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." Oh, the wonders of God. I can't help but think about this when I talk about it. What does God have for us? Why did God put us all together for such a time as this? What is it on the other side of that Jordan, the crisis that we face every day? What is it that God wants to do to touch this world for Jesus Christ? I'm telling you, if it doesn't excite you, it'd be a great morning to get saved. God's got some wonderful things in store for us, but we have got to get with the program. Unless we're going to focus and unless we're going to consecrate ourselves, then we can forget the wonders and experiencing what He wants to do in our midst. Every crisis is designed to cause us to drive us to His presence. And in His presence we've already been told there's where we consecrate ourselves, and that's when God then shows Himself strong in our lives. When one is consecrated to God, his eyes are only on Him; this is when God does wonders in his midst. And nobody can explain it. You can't take any credit for it. It's God!

Joshua 3:6: "And Joshua spoke to the priests saying, 'Take up the Ark of the Covenant and cross over ahead of the people.' So they took up the Ark of the Covenant and went ahead of the people." Now the priests were to take the Ark and they were the first ones to

get their feet wet. They were to take it into the swollen river. Now, so far I've been telling you that the river is swollen. I haven't given you any more information. Let me just tell you that information now that they're ready to cross. Let me just share that with you.

First of all, what I've discovered in my study is that the river is normally about 100 feet wide on a good day when there was no flooding. But when the flooding would come, it could be up to as much as a mile wide. Now, think about that real carefully because you've got two and a half million people about to cross over a river that's up to a mile wide. The river takes its name, "The Descender," from the force of the current. That's explained after it passes through the Sea of Galilee it becomes greatly increased and it drops 1,000 feet and plunges through 27 horrible rapids and cascades, and in the swollen time of the harvest, the speed of that river is greatly increased. If you've ever white water canoed as I have or anything like that, and you've been on a river in a flood stage, you understand how dangerous that can be, because it's so increased in the way that current of that river flows. Most of the time they say it's about four to six miles per hour that it flows, which is a still good, stiff current. But, boy, when it's swollen, look out! That's when that current rises.

No one at this point in Israel, Joshua included, knew how God was going to get them across that river. But the priests were to take the lead. They were to take the Ark and they had to get their feet wet first. They were the first to step into the water. God was about to strengthen the people's faith like never before. I'll tell you, most of you have read this story and you know what happens. And if what we're going to study does not encourage your faith, then, like I said, it'd be a good morning to get saved! I mean, what are you going to do?

This is what brings you to the next task. Well, if God can part that river, if He can part the water, then what can He do in this particular situation? The swollen river can take many shapes and forms in our lives. If you jump down to verses 9-11 you'll see how this is meant to strengthen their faith. Why did God put the flooded river there to begin with? It tells you right here. "Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, 'Come here and hear the words of the Lord your God,' and Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that the living God is among you.'" By what? By what God is about to do. "And that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan."

When they cross this swollen river, everybody sitting there in camp for three days understood the task ahead of them, and when they were going to see what God was going to do to let them get across, no boats, this would be something that would encourage and increase their faith like nothing else. And then when they had to face their Jericho and other places, they could go back and they could remember, and what an encouragement that would be to their heart.

But not only was God going to use this to encourage their faith, God was also going to use this to exalt Joshua as their leader. It's incredible how God does this. Verse 7, "Now the Lord said to Joshua, 'This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.'" Do you realize that's true in any leadership area of life? God has to be the One to proclaim you to be the leader. Nobody else can do it and you can't do it yourself. God has to do it and show Himself strong, which puts you in that position, whether father or whatever leadership position.

Joshua 3:8, "You shall moreover command the priests who are carrying the Ark of the Covenant saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" Now keep remembering the river is flooded. No one has mentioned yet how they're supposed to get across, until verse 12. Now look at verse 12. Talk about crossing that Jordan. "Now then take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe." Now I'm not going to get into that because that comes up in 4:2-8, so I don't want to preempt that. But in verse 13, "It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the Ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."

He begins to tell them what's going to happen. No wonder He didn't say anything about any boats. He wouldn't have put their feet in that water, that flooded Jordan River. The "soles of the feet of the priests" has to do with exactly what He's already told Joshua in chapter 1. The word "sole" means the bare part of your foot, remember? In chapter 1 He says every place that the sole of your foot treads upon has been given to you. And what He's telling them, the priests were to take their shoes off, evidently, and they were to walk considering every step holy unto the Lord. They were consecrated to God, they'd been in His presence, and now they had obedient feet. They were taking every step considered to be holy unto God.

Now God tells them through Joshua how they're going to get across. And I just love that, how He's going to do this! When their feet were to touch the water, He said the water is going to rise up in a heap and it's going to be way back at the city of Adam. Now whether or not it rose up and backed up that far, I don't know, or whether if right at the city of Adam it just stopped, it couldn't flow anymore, and it rose up. But the city of Adam was either 17 or 20 miles from where this spot is. I just love the way God does this. He could have done it 400 feet back but He backed that sucker up 17 miles! All the tributaries that were flowing down, even the tributaries were cut off. Verse 13, "It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the Ark of the Lord, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off."

And in verse 14, “So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant before the people, and when those who carried the Ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark were dipped in the edge of the water, for the Jordan overflows all of its banks in the days of harvest,” verse 16, “the waters which were flowing down from above and rose up in one heap at great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those which were flowing down toward the sea, those tributaries of Arahah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho.”

Oh, the unexplainable wonders of God! What God does when a person get into His presence and consecrates himself to Him. And those flooded rivers of his circumstances loom in front of him. And he says, “God, I don’t have an answer for this, and I know You’re not going to take me around it, but oh, God, You’re going to take me through it. Now how You want to do it is okay, I’m going to put my foot into the water oh God. I want to experience what You can do that no man can explain. I want to step into that which points only to You.” The unexplainable wonders of God.

Do you know, if we can just get a handle on this—when I say we I mean me too—when the rivers of our circumstances flood and we’re staring at something we don’t know how to figure out and there are no answers. We pick up the phone and call everybody that we know and they don’t help us any, but we get in the presence of God and His Word, and in the presence of God, He doesn’t tell us what He’s going to do, He reveals the sin that’s in our life. He reveals the things that are keeping us from being able to understand what He’s doing. And as we consecrate ourselves to Him, then His will becomes very clear to us and it tells us how to step into that water and when we do, we experience the wonders of God and God takes us through life and it works for us, not against us.

Well, a dear friend in my life over the years has been Calvin Moore, the sheriff of Holmes County, Mississippi. And one day Calvin came to me. We had a group of us that would get together and pray, and he said, “Wayne, we need to get together with our group.” And I said, “Why, Calvin?” He said, “I’ve got something tomorrow that could mean the death of a lot of people, me included.”

You know those little towns in the south have those little town squares? And it takes you forever to get around them, especially on Friday when pay day hits. He said, “It’s going to be in Chula, Mississippi. And at that meeting”, he said, “there’s been death threats, there are some very hostile people going to be there. It’s very racially motivated and I don’t know what to do.” He already had about five bullet holes in the side of his car door. Every time he pulled up, there were those bullet holes to remind you of the danger of the job that he had to face every day. He said, “Would you pray? Would you pray that God would somehow just stop this kind of hostility and put this thing down?” We did; we prayed, got in God’s presence, everybody dealing with those things that we had to consecrate ourselves before the Lord.

Well, the next day Calvin went over and it wasn’t a couple or three hours later that he came to get hold of me. I wasn’t able to go. Boy, tears and excitement, I’ve never seen a man so excited in all my life. He was just excited! And I said, “What’s wrong, Calvin, what happened? What happened?” He said, “Oh, Wayne, you won’t believe this.” Unexplainable, folks; when you try to explain it, nobody believes it because unless you were there you can’t believe it. I said, “What do you mean, Calvin?” He said, “We got there and they had all the tables up and, man, the hostility and the weapons that people had.” He said, “Wayne, it was going to be a blood bath if something didn’t stop it.” I said, “What happened?” He said, “Man, you know how we prayed.” He said, “There was a black cloud that just began to form and it got right over that town square and it began to rain where all these hostile people were. It rained so hard and so fierce that it literally washed out the whole thing. They had to leave!”

And I said, “Well, that’s wonderful.” And he said, “No! You don’t understand! It only rained on the courthouse square. I was standing three feet from the curb and the sun was shining on me! But the rain was only on that courthouse square. And God did an unexplainable wonder!”

We live in a time when we don’t seem to understand that anymore. That God can step in any time and in fact, God’s always here. And what He’s waiting on is you and I to get into His presence. Individually. I’m not talking about corporately, I’m taking about individually. I’m talking about every day of our lives, and consecrate ourselves to Him and become the conduit through which He can do the unexplainable wonders that He wants to do.

Step into the water! Step into the water and let God do the unexplainable wonders in our midst. I personally believe we’re right on the edge of it right now. I sense it in our congregation. I’ve sensed it for weeks and weeks and weeks. And when I bow my head to pray, it’s almost like I can hardly stand it, what God is about to do with our people right here. And I’m not talking about just us. It’s not exclusive to just us, it’s everywhere where people are willing to consecrate themselves to Him. Look out! He’s going to do it with us or without us, but I’d rather it be with us. Wouldn’t you? And the way we get in touch with what He’s already doing is when we consecrate ourselves. The unchangeable will of God is never going to change, and the unexplainable wonders of God, but final thing I want you to see is the unsearchable wisdom of God.

The unsearchable wisdom of God

He does something here that is so wise that it just drives me to the point that I can hardly grasp it. It's just like His wisdom is so awesome. Verse 17, "And the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord" walked over to the other side and said come on guys, it's okay? No! They didn't do that: "stood firm on dry ground," now where did they stand firm? "in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan."

Do you understand what's going on here? Two and a half million people, they walk up. And imagine the confidence that it gave to them when they put their feet down on that dry riverbed. And they, first of all, saw that dry riverbed. They thought "How can this be? The river flowed over this just a little while ago." But then they looked up and said, "Oh me! Should I take the next step, because if that river backed up it can be turned loose! Maybe He's going to let us get out into the middle like the Pharaoh and the Egyptians did in the Red Sea. Maybe He's going to kill us." And they looked up and what did they see? They saw the priests standing in the middle of the river holding the Ark of the Covenant! What encouragement that gave to the rest coming across. "Go on, Brother, God's with us and He's given us a way through the swollen river of our circumstance."

God's wisdom, to me, to do this is awesome. Both the old, the young, as they stepped into that river bed, saw the priests and they said, "Oh, Son, God's backed it up and He's going to hold it back until every one of us gets across. He's not going to do a thing until the priests leave the river. Thank you, Lord." And they walked on.

Do you know what this is a picture of to me? It's a picture of how those that have walked with God and have proven Him in their lives, stand in the midst of the swollen circumstances of life as encouragement to those who come behind. And when they look up and see us standing, when they look up and see us holding on to the Word of God, when they look up and see us not leaning to the left and not leaning to the right, what does that say to the generation that's coming behind us? They know who they are and whose they are and it gives them encouragement to come right along.

You say, "Wayne, that's just your conjecture." Well, is it? The apostle Paul seemed to have something to say to the mature so that they might strengthen the weak among them. In his letter to the Thessalonians, he says that he's going to send Timothy to strengthen those who were in Thessalonica. He has a man that he can trust who will stand in the midst of them and be strong so that they can begin to grow in their faith. It says in 1 Thessalonians 3:1, "Therefore when we could endure it no longer," he's talking about the persecution he and Silas had gone through, "we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone. And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith."

And in Hebrews 12:12, "Therefore strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble and make straight paths for your feet so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed." You see, we're all priests in Christ and if we walk focused on Him, standing in the midst of the swollen rivers of our circumstances, trusting God and holding on to His presence, that sends a message to the people that are around us and behind us so that they might be strengthened in their walk.

And so I believe God is telling us all today, "Step into the water, step into the water. Don't fear it, don't look for another way. Trust Me and walk through it—whatever it is that is in front of you—and I will do wonders in your midst that will so encourage you that when the test comes, then you'll have the faith to be able to endure and to face it."

The unchangeable will of God, the unexplainable wonders of God, and the unsearchable riches and wisdom of God. In the closing illustration, I had a friend when I grew up named Susie Hall. She's with Jesus today. She would come in the house and we always knew Susie was there because the cookie jar would be banging. She never knocked on the door, she just walked in; this was like part of our family. She was like my sister growing up. Her brother Barry and I are dear friends to this day. Susie was full of life. She was captain of the cheerleaders on her high school teams and she was just a wonderful person.

One day I was at the house and somebody called me, and a friend of mine worked for an ambulance service, and he said, "I heard a call that came in and said they were taking somebody by the name of Susie Hall to the hospital emergency. She was about to die." I thought, "Not the Susie that I know." Immediately I got hold of the Hall family and they said, "Yes, Susie is on her way there." A long story short, Susie had been swimming at a lake and just came out of the water, looked up, in excruciating pain, fell over dead, and that was it. The doctors said it was something that happened to the blood veins or something in her back had never completely matured and back in those days they said she couldn't have lived any longer. They said she was destined to live till then. Of course, I believe that about everybody. I believe there is an appointed time to be born and an appointed time die. Nobody changes that.

But she died! I remember going over to her house, and Barry Hall, a big old football player, ran over and grabbed me and just sobbed and sobbed. I stayed with him that night. And here I was, a young man trying to figure out death to start with, much less how does a Christian face death? How do they handle it? I remember right in the middle of the night I heard a commotion. I stayed in Barry's room, he had bunk beds, and the bed moved and I heard him get up and I heard voices out in the little den area and in the basement off of where his bedroom was. And I got over to the door and I just kind of peeked it open and there was Ellis Hall. Ellis Hall was the daddy, and Ellis Hall had his family down there and he would weep, and that's what God allows us to do when tragedy strikes us, but right in the midst of it he would cry out to God, "Oh, God, thank you that you're going to take us through this. Thank

you, Father, that you're going to take us through this."

I remember being a 15 or 16 year old teenage boy trying to grasp what was going on there! But I read it in Joshua and now I understand it. He was standing on what he knew to stand on. He was in the middle of the crisis of his life, weeping, and there is nothing wrong with that. He was venting the hurt and the emotion, but in the midst of it, he hung onto the presence of God that was with him, and as he prayed he said, "Oh God, don't let anything in our lives keep your testimony from being heard to other people as we go through these days that are ahead of us."

Isn't that the same thing? In the midst of your crisis, you get into the presence of God. When you get in His presence, you realize immediately that He's in control; everything is all right in Him. And you consecrate yourselves. And as you stand in the middle of the crisis of your life, stand trusting Him, holding onto the Ark, the presence of Christ in your life. When you do that, when you do that, the people who come from behind are encouraged. And that's what we're seeing here. The unchangeable will of God, the unexplainable wonders of God and the unsearchable wisdom of

I want to thank many of you for standing strong in the crisis of your life which encourages me when I have to face them that I can walk through the same way. That's what it's all about.

Joshua 4

The Need to remember

I want you to turn with me to Joshua 4. We're going to talk tonight about the need to remember; the need to remember, as we cover this whole chapter. It is so awesome to be in the Old Testament because it's a narrative and you can get in the current and let it carry you. It's a great flow.

The word "remember" is used 168 times in Scripture. Think it might be important? The word "remind" is used 9 times, so 177 times from Genesis to Revelation, God uses that very thought; to remember, to be reminded. I don't know about you, but the hardest lessons I'm having to learn are the ones I thought I already knew. You see, it's interesting, God can do great things in our life, and then we turn right around and act as if He doesn't even exist. Well, last week we saw how the Israelites stepped into the water of God's will. They crossed over, they finally crossed over the Jordan River; the flooded Jordan River. They were now in the land God had given to them. Now God's unchangeable will for them to be able to get over there was that if they're going to possess what they already have, if we're going to possess what we already have, it's going to have to be two things: 1) we must focus on Him—"Jesus, be the center of our life. Jesus, be the fire in my heart, Jesus be the wind in my sails." That's what we just saw. We focus on Him, and once we focus on Him, then 2) we must learn to consecrate ourselves to Him. I don't believe it comes the opposite way. I'm glad that's the way it's taught us here, that you focus on Him first and then the consecrating of yourself to Him.

The Israelites were instructed to put the Ark 3,000 feet in front of them so that everybody could see it. But why: because it was symbolic of the presence of God. Now, did God dwell inside that Ark? No! But that Ark was very special to them and it symbolized His presence with them. As a matter of fact, it was stolen from them later on in their history and they kept thinking that something was mystical about that Ark. No, it's God's presence with them, but they needed to focus on that. It's just like with us, we have got to learn to focus on Christ. He is our Ark, and we went through this last time together. We cannot look at the circumstance; we've got to learn to look at Him who is our provider in the midst of that circumstance.

Then Joshua told the people to consecrate themselves unto God. Once they saw the Ark, now it comes time to consecrate. In Joshua 3:5, "Then Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.'" Once we have our focus on Him, I honestly believe that it's only then that we begin to understand why it is that we need to consecrate ourselves to Him, to yield our lives to Him. Because once you get in His presence, everything pales to nonexistence, and you begin to realize that there's nothing else you could turn to. That's why you'd want to consecrate yourself unto Him. Only He can take us into His will.

But not only is His will unchangeable, His works are unexplainable. You see, when we begin to focus on Him and consecrate ourselves to Him, then we begin to experience and we partake of what He says is already ours. I honestly believe this. I had a man say this to me years ago, "If we can explain what's going on in our lives, then obviously, it's not Him." Because when God moves, it's really unexplainable. You try; you do the best you can; but you really can't take someone to that level where you have met with God. In 3:14 it says, "So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan, with the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant before the people," it goes on to say in 15-16, the priests put their feet into the water and that water backed up 17 miles, or 17 miles away it rose up in a heap and refused to flow. The bottom of the river bed dried up with the priest standing out in the middle of it so that the people could cross over it. What a day!

The thing I love about Joshua is, Joshua didn't ask Him how they were going to cross it. Joshua just did what He told him to do. Joshua knew that He had already parted the Red Sea, so He knew that whatever God said, you just stepped out on it. That's His word and it'll carry you through. He just trusted God to do it.

The water stopped flowing at 17 miles away. Can you imagine the wall of water that was? Well, maybe Mel Gibson will make a movie on that one day and we can get a picture of it. What an overwhelming circumstance though, that they faced. Let me ask you this question and let's just get into the message tonight. What is it this week—because I asked you this last week and it changes from day to day sometimes and sometimes the situation you face just gets bigger—what is the overwhelming circumstance that you're facing right now in your life? God says, "My life is within you. I don't want you to experience My land; I want you to experience My life. I've created this circumstance to teach you to trust Me. Are you willing to step into the flooded rivers of My will?"

Simon Peter was out in the boat—you know I love Simon Peter—the only time he ever opened his mouth was to change feet! He's one of my favorite people in the New Testament. I mean, impetuous is not even the word for it. And when they were in the storm crossing the Sea of Galilee that time, the Lord Jesus came walking out across the water and He was intending to go right on by them. The interesting thing was that Peter yelled out, "Lord, is that you?" And Jesus said—my way of saying it—"Yes, it's Me!" "Well, if it's You, bid me come to You." "Well, come on, son." And Peter got out of the boat. Have you ever thought about the fact that he didn't step on the water? "Oh, he did too, Wayne." Now wait a minute! Think about it for a second. He didn't step on the water, he stepped on the Word. Jesus said, "Come," and he stepped out. And everything that was over his head was under his feet. There's an incredible picture. The only time he sunk was when he got his eyes off the One that he had stepped out upon His word and His will. Then he sunk. But thank God he got out of the boat. That's what I love about him. At least he got out of it.

Well, there's no fear when we trust God; no fear whatsoever. Joshua had no fear; the people might have, but he did not and the priests that went out did not. When we trust God, as John said in one of his epistles, "perfect love casts out all fear."

Well, not only was God's will unchangeable—focus on Him, consecrate yourself to Him; and God's works are unexplainable—you can't explain a river stopping flowing 17 miles away, there's no way to explain that to anybody; but His wisdom was unsearchable. I guarantee it says in one verse, and we'll read through it tonight, we won't really stop to comment on it, said they "hurried" to get across.

Would you hurry to get across? The water is 17 miles back, the priests are out in the middle and it's a mile across. At flood time it was a mile across. In normal days it was 100 feet, but it's a mile flooded out. Well, in verse 17 He had the priests to stand in the middle of the river Jordan. That was such wisdom! He had them stand in the middle; they couldn't cross over, they couldn't complete their journey until everybody else had crossed. They held the Ark for the rest of them to go over. And that Ark, again, being the Ark of God's presence; it was God holding that river back. And as long as they could see that Ark, and as long as they could see those priests, the fear diminished, and buddy, they got across that river.

Such wisdom that God has. I shared with you last week, I really believe this is the way He works in body of Christ. People that have gone on in the journey and you see them in the midst of their terrible circumstances standing on the Word and the Will of God and God holding them up gives us courage to go on and cross the waters that God puts before us.

Well, with them was the Ark. This is where we pick up our story. The priests are still standing in the middle of that river bed holding the Ark and the people now have crossed over, they're on the other side. Now, why would God do this? The only thing separating them from what God said was theirs was that flooded river, and yet He made them go through it, and He did it in such a miraculous way. Why would God do that? What is it about that experience He wanted them to remember years later in their life as they faced a different test in the land? Well, there are three things that I want to talk to you about tonight that came out of chapter 4.

You know, when I study these chapters I just meditate on them for days and just read it over and over and over again, and just let it soak. And finally, I just love it when you sit down and don't know really where you're going and then it just starts coming together. And this is what God put on my heart: three things.

A lesson that was to direct their life

First of all, that miraculous crossing of the Jordan River was a lesson that was to direct their life. He gave them a lesson; He taught them what faith was right there. And this lesson was to direct their life, I could have put forever. This was to be how they were to live forever, even though they wouldn't cross any more rivers, they would have to face other battles: He wanted them to know what faith was. He wanted them to have a memorial of what He wanted to do in their life.

Joshua 4:1, "Now when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord spoke to Joshua saying, "Take for yourself twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe and command them saying, 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests feet are standing firm and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place [that's significant but won't come up for a little bit] where you will lodge tonight.'"

Now, He mentioned this back in chapter 3 and last time I was with you I told you that we're not going to talk about it until we get here, and here we are. After crossing over the river they were to go back to where the priests were still standing. He hadn't let them come over, come out of the river bed, because the moment they move with that Ark the river would come crashing back down and flood its banks. They were to pick up one, and evidently heavy, stone. Now each one of them from the 12 different tribes, each one of them was to pick up a stone at the feet of those priests standing in the middle of the Jordan River. Again, the stones were so heavy they had to carry them on their shoulders.

Verse 4, "So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had already appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe, and Joshua said to them, 'Cross again to the Ark of the Lord your God and into the middle of the Jordan and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder [now you don't pick up a light stone and carry it on your shoulder, so it's probably heavy], according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel.'" Now these 12 stones that these representatives from each tribe would pick up were going to end up being a reminder to the nation.

Now, two things: first of all, of what God had done. But that's not it, that's not all of it. Secondly was how He went about doing it. In other words, anybody can believe that God can do anything at any time, but faith is not based on what He can do; faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God. And so it was two things it would remind them of: not just that God could, but the fact of how He goes about doing what He does. In verse 6: "Let this be a sign among you." The word "sign" means a memorial or a reminder. These 12 stones would remind Israel and their future generations that when they believed God, when they trusted God, they could enter into what God said was theirs.

Verse 6 continues, "so that when your children ask later saying, 'What do these stones mean to you,' then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever." Now, you've got to get into the story, and it's hard for me to do this because I don't have any other way to do this but what I say. Israel, because of disobedience, had for 40 years wandered confused and not knowing what was happening. For 40 years they wandered in the wilderness. And only for one reason: this land was also theirs at that time, but they refused to believe God. Spies had come over years before, 40 years before, Joshua and Caleb were two of the spies that came back and said, "Let's go, man, we can eat these guys for lunch." And the people said, "No, they're as big as grasshoppers," and the people listened to the majority and so congregational rule won out and they walked around Mt. Sinai for 40 years until that whole generation died in the wilderness.

Now, here we have a fresh, brand new generation led by Joshua. And Caleb is also in this mix, he'll come up later on. And Joshua is going to take them across, but they have made a different choice: to focus on God and to consecrate themselves to Him and to believe Him. And as a result of that, they finally, finally, crossed over into that which God had already given to them. And how had they crossed? God had miraculously parted the waters. And why did He do it that way? To teach them straight out what faith is all about. If I'm not in a crisis, if I'm not desperate for Him, then faith is not even needed. If everything is going well, there's money in the bank, the skies are blue and everybody is happy, what's the deal? But God has a way of putting us in situations and circumstances that drive us to the end of ourselves. And when we get there we find what we've been looking for. And He says, "That's it, right there! That's it, right there! Remember this; remember this, because there's another storm coming."

These 12 stones were to stand as a reminder forever to the nation of Israel for generations to come of how to possess what was theirs that God had already given to them. And I want to make sure that we don't be too redundant, but I want to make sure you hear me: God had already laid it out to Joshua in chapter 1, way back when we started the book. In verse 3 there He said, "Every place which the sole of your foot treads upon, Joshua. I'm not fooling with you, son, I'm not fooling with you. You're a different man, you're a different generation. I'm not going to mess with you, I'm telling you one thing: I'm going to let you go over, but when you go over, yes, I've given you the land, but just don't run over there and think you're going to get it overnight. Every place that you treat as holy, every step that you take as holy; I'm going to give that land to you. But, Joshua, when you choose not to obey me, remember this, you're not going to get what you already have in Me. You're not going to experience it. There's only one way to appropriate it and that's by faith."

Walking in obedience required being in His Word, that what He said in 1:7, "Be careful to do all according to the law which Moses my servant commanded you." And then in verse 8 He says, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth"—remember our message on that?—"but you shall meditate in it day and night." I don't know how difficult it is and I don't want to sound legalistic, because you can get into the Word anytime you want to get into the Word. If it's four o'clock in the morning, if it's at night, but the Word of God has got to start getting into our lives. Jesus said, "I come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." "But Wayne, you're not going to experience it except to the degree that you focus on Me and consecrate yourself to Me and get into My Word and let My Word get into you. Then, as you take every step as holy you will then experience what is already yours."

Do you understand how much counseling that would eliminate? Of how many people come thinking they needed counseling, but what they really need is discipleship? Prescriptive discipleship? They need desperately for somebody to set them down and walk

them through this very thing. Well, we saw in our review of chapter 3, says basically the same thing. And when they did this, God did the miracle. He removed the barrier between them and what was theirs, but only when they were willing to consecrate themselves and focus on Him. They were never to forget this. They were never to forget this. To walk in God's will, yielded to Him, surrendered to His will; it is only then when we possess what we already have.

I was doing a conference which had about 5,000 pastors, actually youth pastors, from every denomination. They asked me what I wanted to do a seminar on, and I told them I wanted to do a seminar on: Is ministry something you achieve for God or is ministry something you receive from God? Well, I thought nobody would show up, but they showed up, standing room only, 350 at least in this big area they gave me to meet with them. I taught out of the Scriptures and showed them that the gifts and the ministry and the affect doesn't come from man and man cannot manipulate it, manufacture it or produce it. God has to do it. When I finished they just sat there and looked at me, and I'm kind of like, "Okay, thank you for coming, see you later." They didn't move. They just sat there. They kept sitting there. I'm thinking, "Okay, what do I do now?"

Finally one of them raised his hand and said, "Can I say something?" And I said sure. He said, "As I listened to you today and it began to break, that is exactly as I came, I was reminded of how, when I got into ministry, when I first started, that I could not do it. That if I didn't get my life surrendered to Christ and let Jesus be Jesus in me, I would never understand what ministry is all about." And, man, he began to break, you could see it all over. But this guy was standing there and he broke, and he said, "I've gotten under the pressure of people trying to put numbers over me and over the last several years I've lost my joy, I've lost my focus. You have brought back to my mind what I had forgotten about what it's all about." And he sat down and another one said, "Can I say something?"

One hour and forty-five minutes almost or maybe a little longer than that, we held up another group because I didn't know what to do. People standing up and saying, "Oh, dear God, what's wrong with us? We're going about ministry the way the world goes about business. We have forgotten. We have forgotten."

And God said to the nation of Israel, "You build this memorial because I don't want you to forget how it works." It's never any different, it's simple, but oh, is it ever profound. These 12 stones show how intensely personal this is, because there were 12 tribes. Each tribe had to get a stone to remember. You see, as a nation, they took the land, yes as a nation, but each tribe had to take their allotment. They had to go in and take their group: Dan, the tribe of Dan did not do it, and the tribe of Dan is completely erased in the book of Revelation as even being a part of Israel because they disobeyed God. So each one had to take on their own responsibility. Boy, that hit me: as a church, corporately, we can enter what God has for us all only to the degree that individually we're willing to walk in the light God has given to us. Like my son said, "The strength of the wolf is in the pack." And when everyone starts walking that way, then collectively the strength of the whole is manifested and we can walk into that which God has given us. And this truth must govern our life.

Now, I want you to do something for me tonight, a little different from what we normally do. I want you just to close your eyes. I'm not going to do anything strange, just relax! If you're visiting tonight this is not going to be strange! I want you to close your eyes, draw a circle around yourself as if nobody else is here, and I'm not through with the message so when I finish this, don't get up and leave. I want you with your eyes closed to think back over your life as a believer. And I want you to think of the times that you cried out to God. God wanted you to experience something about Himself, and He put a flooded river in front of you in some circumstance. And in the desperation of the moment He spoke to your heart and you said yes to Him and to His will and you stepped out into the waters of His will and God parted the waters. Now, whatever that means to you—I'm not trying to put words in your mouth or thoughts in your mind—but I want you to think back, certainly when you got saved, you know for a fact that you can start there, but come on down the road a piece, when you were going through that valley and you cried out and God met you in a way, you knew this about Him mentally, but you'd never experienced it before. And God manifested Himself to your life.

Now, let me ask you one more thing. Have you forgotten what caused that to happen then, and are you living in that way now? Has there ever been a time in your life that you loved Jesus more than you love Him tonight? And you can look back and reclaim Him, but for some odd reason it's not there now. Now do you see why He wants to put this memorial? We tend to forget. If you're like me, we tend to forget. Okay, you can look up, and see: nothing strange happened. I just wanted you to think with me. So often you hear a message like this and you hear it about Israel and you think, "Man, that's nice, that's a really nice message." And you walk out and you don't somehow make the connection: connect the dots. God's speaking to all of us. God's moved in our life, and when He did, we experienced Him, the life He has given us, like we've never known it before.

Well, each time God has taken you through the flooded river of circumstance in your life, somehow ask Him to make this a reminder, because you're going to go through more. You're either in a storm, you've just come out of a storm, or you're going into a storm. So don't get real excited if you're not in one right now. And life is orchestrated this way. But let's don't forget the lessons we've already learned and they're always the same thing: trust Me, focus on Me, consecrate yourself to Me. Let this be a memorial to you.

I was thinking back when I first learned the lesson that God was my provider. Not the church, not a ministry, but God was my

provider. It was difficult at the time because I wasn't seeing a whole lot of provision. And I got hold of Luke 6:38 and a friend of mine gave me a tape, and I took it home and listened to it and I listened to it. And I began to learn what God said about giving in my life. And I thought, "Wait a minute, I'm not anxious about giving, I'm anxious about getting!" But I saw that you give to get so that you can give again. You never give to get so that you can can all you get and sit on a can and poison the rest. You always want to keep it in the flow, and I had never really understood God being my provider. That's why I always argued and griped about my salary and everything else. That's why I was always looking for a better church with a bigger salary, because I didn't trust God to be my provider. And yet, this is my birthright, this is who He made Himself to me. I didn't have enough money, I mean, it was really tight. And God said, "I want you to learn it now!"

My Mama sent me \$50 in the mail. That was a lot of money: it was a \$50 bill. I hadn't seen a \$50 bill. And I couldn't wait to find where I wanted to spend that and God said, "That's not yours! Put it in your pocket and keep it and I'll let you know." About three weeks went by and a friend of mine was with Campus Crusade and he came by and I hadn't seen him in a long time. He said, "Wayne, can you support our ministry on a monthly basis?" I said, "Oh, man! There's no way! But I tell you what I can do. I can give you a one-time gift." I pulled out that \$50 bill and I gave it to him. I remember the joy that was in my heart. I'm thinking, "God, You're my provider. You told me to do that! I didn't do that on my own. You told me to do that." And whenever you act in obedience, you'll never out give God!

Funny thing happened. Some people came by, and I had a '73 Buick that I used to leave the keys in hoping somebody would steal. I drove it down to the church because some people said they were going to take us to Jackson, Mississippi, and they were going to take us out to eat! Only place we could ever go out to eat was 17 miles at a truck stop or some kind of chicken place that you later wished you'd never eaten there! So they took us to Jackson and got us a nice meal and we came back and then they took my wife, Diana, they took her into a department store and bought her a purse. And Diana came back and she whispered in my ear, "Wayne, that purse cost \$25!" And I said out loud, I didn't mean to say it out loud, I said, "I wonder where the other \$25 is?"

I got back, went to get in my old car, nobody had stolen it, and I opened up the door and when I went to get inside the car, the visor was down and it hit me in the head. Boom! And I thought, "Good grief, I never put the visor down." And I looked and two \$10 bills and a \$5 bill had been clipped to the visor with a little note that said, "Wayne, I was riding by and saw your car and God impressed me to give you this \$25. I hope it doesn't offend you." Oh, no! It didn't offend me! I just discovered something. I just discovered—and I don't know if it makes any sense to you or not, maybe that's not the swollen river you've crossed—but that was a swollen river in my life and God said, "Son, you focus on Me, you consecrate on Me and do what My Word tells you to do and I'm your Provider, Jehovah Jirah. I take care of you! Let that be a faith builder."

A lesson that was to exalt their leader

But the second thing: not only was this lesson to direct their life, secondly it was a lesson to determine their leader. God was going to do something to exalt their leader right in front of them. Do you realize that God is the only one that can give a leader authority? A leader can never demand authority, he has to earn it. And God raises him up as a leader. A leader is somebody who is a good follower, not a person who is a leader. The books written on leadership today folks, fall far short of what God says a leader is. Leadership is followship. It was Joshua who led the people to trust God. But not any further beyond where he was willing to trust God. And as he trusted God, they were willing to follow him. His leadership was earned through followship.

Verse 8: "Thus the sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan just as the Lord spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. And they carried them over with them to the lodging place and put them down there. Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan and the place where the feet of the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing." And they are there, the Scripture says, "to this day." When it was written, they were still there.

We have no command that told Joshua to put the altar in the middle of the river. Some people say that shows the Bible is not truly the Word of God. That's ridiculous! Maybe Joshua built it for himself, who knows, but just because it's not in there doesn't mean God didn't tell him, but he put the memorial in the middle, but then they took the other stones to the first place of lodging.

Well, the assignment to the priests was to stand in the river until the people crossed over. Verse 10: "For the priests who carried the Ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the Lord had commanded Joshua to speak to the people according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed. All the people standing on the banks watching as the priests now came out of the river." Of course when they did, the water came crashing down.

It mentions the two and a half tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh; yes, they went across in battle array, but only 40,000 of the men came across, but they had to go across before the priests came out. Verse 12: "The sons of Reuben, the sons of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel just as Moses had spoken to them, about 40,000 equipped for war before the Lord to the desert plains of Jericho."

Joshua 4:14: "On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel so that they revered him, just as they revered Moses all the days of his life." When it was all said and done, the miracle had taken place, the people and the priests with the Ark were now on the other side, and God exalted Joshua. Now, see, Joshua had been faithful to do all that God had told him to do, and now the people looked at him and saw that he truly was their leader. He didn't take a course in leadership, he didn't get a certificate, he didn't read a book; no, he was simply a follower. He did what God told him to do and God told him back in chapter 1, "If you'll follow Me, they'll follow you."

Now I say that because maybe you're a father in a home, husband, whatever, and you want to be the spiritual leader in your home. I want to tell you, hold these things in your mind because it's never going to change. God says, "Now listen, I'm not worried about your sons and your daughters and your wife right now: I'm worried about you. And here's the simple truth: you obey Me." "Well, what about..." "You obey Me. You follow Me and your family will follow you because leadership is followship." We live in a day that stresses a leadership that is man-centered instead of God-centered. Leadership is followship.

It's amazing to me that my wife still lives with me. There is a reward in heaven for her. But years ago, God broke me. God broke me. In fact, I don't have the time to tell you the story, but He broke me to the point where I wept for two hours one night until my nose bled. I mean, He totally change my life when He got hold of me and saved me. I'd been in the ministry for eight years. It's great to have saved pastors. And my wife began to see a difference in my life. She began to see a submission to God's will and to God's Word and a willingness to do it.

Now, I haven't been perfect all along, but here's what she told me one day, she said, "I couldn't submit to you before, because I didn't see anything in you that was worth submitting to!" If you know my wife, she's real sweet. She didn't say it that way, that's my interpretation. But she said, "Now that I see you willing to follow God, Wayne, it's freed me, because I'm willing to follow you." It's incredible how that works. I didn't know that. Nobody had told me that principle, God had just chosen to put me in a place in my life and break me.

But this is the bottom line. The word "revered" in verse 14 is the word meaning to respect. You want people to respect you as a leader? You want people to follow you as a leader, then you then be a follower of Him. You be about the things God has put in your life and watch how others will line up behind you. A leader is a follower. The miraculous crossing of the Jordan River is not only to direct their lives, but it was to determine their leader, the one out front, the one hearing from God, telling them, and obeying himself.

A lesson that was to disciple their children

But then, finally, the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River was also to disciple their little ones. That was part of it. He wanted this to carry from generation to generation to generation. The text now jumps back to those priests when they came out of the river bed.

Joshua 4:5: "Now the Lord said to Joshua, 'Command the priests who carried the Ark of the Testimony that they come up from the Jordan.' So Joshua commanded the priests saying, 'Come up from the Jordan.' It came about when the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord had come up from the middle of the Jordan and the soles of the priests feet were lifted up to the dry ground [look at this], that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and when over its bank just like before." They just came right back where it was. God had stopped it and now the water came back. Both the water and the people had obeyed God and that's the bottom line. Everything had worked out just as God had planned, it was a day that glorified God and exalted Joshua.

Now, as long as the priests had stood in the midst of the river the water had been back. But they came crashing down when those priests left the river. Verse 19: "Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho." Now back in verse 5 He's told them, "You don't put that memorial up on the banks over there until you get to the first place that you're going to camp," and this was it.

Joshua 4:20: "Those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan Joshua set up at Gilgal." If you studied the Old Testament, you know a little about Gilgal. The first king was crowned at Gilgal, 1 Samuel 11; David was welcomed back after Absalom's rebellion and in 2 Samuel 19. Samuel thought Gilgal was important enough to put it on his ministry circuit, in 1 Samuel 7:16. There was a school of prophets in Gilgal in 2 Kings 1, 2 and 4:38. Gilgal became so important to Joshua; it became the center of operations as you're going to see in 9:6, 10:6, 15, 43 and 14:6. Gilgal was a very special place. Gilgal was eight miles from the Jordan River. They carried those stones eight miles, but it was two miles from Jericho: this is key. It was very, very close to Jericho. The reminder of God's power, of what's going to be needed, of when is it that I'll experience what God has said to me, "Only when I focus and I consecrate," was placed at Gilgal, because Jericho was going to be the biggest battle they had ever thought about having in their entire lives.

It was at this place, at this place that they camped, at Gilgal that they were to begin and carry on for the rest of their life, teaching their children this truth. Not just that they crossed the Jordan, but they had to teach them what they did in order to experience what God had for them. And that was to start right here. God said, "I want you to tell the generations after generations after generations.

Joshua 4:21: "He said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, "What are these stones?" Then you are to inform your children saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground, for the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed; just as the Lord your God had done to the Red Sea which He dried up before us until we had crossed, that all the peoples of the earth [not just Jews] may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, so that you may fear the Lord your God forever.'"

Isn't that incredible? God had put on Israel the responsibility to tell their children and to pass it on, not just to their people, but to all generations, that God is the One who brought them across: to fear God, to trust God. The God who can open the river is the God everybody ought to be able to know. Israel needed to tell the other nations about it and to invite them to trust Him too. Well, they were going to do this, not just themselves, but to teach their children who would one day have to fight their own battles.

You know what's unfortunate? When I was in youth work, the biggest battle I had in churches were not the youth; everybody thinks it's the youth. No, it's not the youth. It's the parents of the youth that were not willing to live the convictions of their children. I saw it over and over and over again. What He says here is, "Folks, not only are you to walk that way, parent, but you're to tell your children because we've got to get this message out that our God is worth trusting and our God is faithful to do what He says to do."

So the memorial was to direct their lives forever; it was to determine their leader, when God did that He exalted the ones that were in leadership; but thirdly, it was to disciple their little ones. Last night I was by myself. My phone rang and it was my granddaughter, Holland. And she said, "Poppie, I have the best news to tell you!" I said, "What is that, Holland?" And she said, "Wednesday night I got saved, I asked Jesus in my heart Wednesday night."

You know, when I was studying this, I thought I am so blessed to know that I know her parents are going to be telling her. Her grandparents are going to be telling her about what it means to walk, how to experience the life. Oh, folks, listen. If you're still thinking Christianity is a religion and you've had that in your past, somehow ask God to erase every thought in your brain. It has nothing to do with a religion; it's a relationship with the Father through His Son and the way you receive Him is by faith and the way you walk in Him is by faith. The way you experience the life that He puts within you is the way you received it to start with: focus on Him, consecrate yourself to Him, and when He moves, chalk it up as a reminder. The next time, don't make it complex: it's very simple. Come back to Him, to His will and to His Word and say yes and possess what's already yours in Christ Jesus.

Joshua 5

Preparing for the Battle

Would you turn with me to Joshua 5. We're getting ready for the battle now. The battle comes in chapter 6 when they get to Jericho. They're preparing for battle: preparing for battle. And I want you to make sure that you understand that in the Christian life, only when you're walking yielded to Christ does the battle begin. There's no battle in the wilderness. Wilderness is when the flesh is ruling our life: there's no battle. We're defeated and walking around confused and not having any direction. But when you cross over that Jordan, when you step into the waters of God's will, and you step over into the land that God has given to us, then the battle begins. And what we're going to see here is the fact that Joshua and the people are preparing for battle.

Now, we've got to make sure we're in the flow. Crossing the swollen Jordan River, the barrier that stood between them and what God said was theirs, was such an awesome event in the life of Israel. They stepped into the water of God's will and immediately the water was not really parted, it was removed; it was backed up 17 miles. And the river bed dried up so that they could walk across. Now this event would serve now to direct the rest of their lives. It was to show them what walking by faith is all about. But it would also do something else: it would determine their leader. God is no respecter of persons, He respects faith, and just like Moses trusted Him when he was with Him, Joshua trusts Him and he's with Him. And what happens is that once they cross the Jordan, the people had no doubt that God had his hand on Joshua as their leader. But this event would also serve to disciple their little ones. God wanted the whole world to know that He is the One true God. And the way to do that, obviously, is to be telling your children who tell theirs, who tell theirs, and you pass it on and it begins to spread out and the world learns that God can be trusted and that God is faithful.

Well, this event was not just about God parting that water and moving it back. Many people think that, and that's all they talk about is how God moved the water back. No, that was just part of the event. The event was about how to experience the power of God. If you ever want to know how to walk in His power, study this event. It was about how to see the swollen rivers of our circumstances removed as we learn to trust God. Well, and it's how we experience His power. We experience His power in the very same way, just like Israel. Israel had to focus on Him and consecrate their lives to Him. And we'd see it differently in the New Covenant. We'd see Jesus saying, "Abide in the vine." We'd see Paul saying, "Be filled with the spirit." We'd see John saying, "Walk in the light."

It's all the same thing. You focus on Him, you consecrate, you set yourself apart to Him and to His Word and to His will, and then God does what only God can do. And this is what they were to remember. They were to remember the whole event, not just that God had done it, but what they had to do to walk in His power. And that was the key; that's the key to all of us and that was the key to them. Faith is not just believing that God can do something. That's not faith; it's just an understanding of who God is. Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God. And faith involves a focus on Him, a dying to our understanding, a dying to our emotion, and a dying to our will. Faith comes when we consecrate ourselves to Him and to His will and to His Word, and when we obey Him and say yes to Him, then we walk in the victory that God says is ours.

Well, this even was so important that Joshua had the people build, or God had Joshua have the people build, a memorial at Gilgal. Gilgal was about seven or eight miles from where they crossed and two miles from Jericho. What a perfect place to put it. Right before your first big battle you have to remember what faith is all about. And then Joshua himself went back and put one in the middle of the river while the priests were still standing there, so when the waters receded after flood time, people could still understand what God did on that miraculous day when the people trusted Him and He did what only He could do.

Well, in verse 1 of chapter 5 we find another thing that this event did. If you'll look with me at 5:1: "Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel." See, not only did the miracle of the crossing of the Jordan become a memorial to the Israelites; it became a monster to the Canaanites. It overwhelmed them: it melted their hearts. When they heard about what God had done to get those people across, it just sucked the spirit right out of them. They were now putty in the hands of the Israelites. The Amorites, the kings of the Canaanites, I mean, they didn't know what to do; they were scared to death.

And what was happening? God was preparing the way. Isn't it awesome! God's already gone before them. God's put so much fear into people's hearts, "Listen, a piece of cake! Go in and get your land," is what He's trying to tell the Israelites. God was preparing the way for His people. But I want you to notice something about that verse. It's not really the Israelites they were afraid of; it was their God that they were afraid of. In that last part of it, it says, "When they heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel, until they had crossed." Then they were frightened.

You see, God had shown Himself strong for His people. That's been my prayer for years: that we would live in such a surrendered way that God would show Himself strong and that would send a message to this lost world, that He is the one true God. And that's what was happening right here. It was a witness that went out, but it was God that the pagan world was afraid of. When they heard that He had dried up the waters of the Jordan, I love that phrase, they were frightened, their hearts melted.

Well, there is no enemy that can take from us what God has given to us. I don't know when I'm going to fully grasp that and when we all are going to grasp that. I'm still a pilgrim, I'm still struggling. Nobody can take my joy from me. When my joy is gone I have given it away, I've chosen not to walk in it, because God said we don't have a land like Israel, we have a life and when my joy is gone, something is wrong with me, something is not wrong with God and something is not wrong with the joy. Something is wrong with me; I choose not to walk in it. And it's the same way here. If they don't take their land, it's not the problem of God and it's not a problem with the victory, it's a problem they choose not to walk in it. We see this laid out for us right here in this Scripture.

Their covenant was renewed

Well, now they're in the land and now it's time for battle. And they're preparing for battle in chapter 5 and there are three things that I want us to see, because it's the same way when we get ready to walk in the light that God has given to us, these three things are very important to us. Three things: first of all, their covenant was renewed. Look in 5:2. "At that time the Lord said to Joshua, 'Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time.'" Now when you first read that and very carelessly you might not understand that. But it's really simple. What He's saying is this new generation had never been circumcised, and we'll see in a moment what a shame that was. Because circumcision was a specific mark upon the male and it had to do with covenant. He explains all this in verses 3-5, that He's talking about the new generation.

Verses 3 says, "So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath Haaraloth. This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along with the way as they came out of Egypt. For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way, as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised."

Now we need to understand—and I'm sure you do, but let's just go over it again—what this circumcision meant to them. It was a mark of covenant. You see, in Genesis 15 God had covenanted with Abraham, but the sign of the covenant, the sign that he was in covenant with God, was circumcision, and it came out in Genesis 17. That's when it was first mentioned. Circumcision was a cutting away of the flesh on the male organ from which the seed of life was passed on. These Israelites were the physical seed of Abraham, not the spiritual seed, the physical seed, of Abraham. Covenant, the sign of covenant with God is the strongest word in any

language for “when two become one.” There’s no more binding word in any language than covenant. When two entered into a covenant—oneness—they each lost their right to independent living. They entered into the newness of life.

It’s like a marriage today. A marriage is a picture of covenant: when two who are single, used to living independent lives, one day become one and then they lose their right to independent living and they move into a dependent stage, and they move into a oneness. It’s a brand new way of living. And that’s what covenant was.

Covenant was always made on the basis of love. You didn’t covenant but with one person, and you looked a lifetime sometimes to find that one person and you entered into covenant with that one person: like David and Jonathan in the Old Testament. God wanted a love relationship with mankind, so He took a word that was familiar to their culture, to their understanding, which was “covenant.” and He began to create a people. He covenanted with Abraham. Abraham was not Jewish; there was no such thing as an Israelite. Abraham came from Chaldea, but then they took him and it was through him that Isaac came and then through him that Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, came, and then Israel had twelve sons. It began to evolve and you began to see the Israelites develop by God’s own personal idea. It was His idea. He wanted a people amongst the pagan nations of the world through whom His Son could find His humanity. His humanity would come through the Jewish people.

Now in the ancient covenant ritual there would have been a sacrifice made. The animals were cut in half and each half was laid opposite each other, forming a bloody path which was called the “way of death.” Now it was here that the two people walking into covenant would walk. They would walk—it was a very sobering thing—they would walk in between these slain halves, showing the very costliness of covenant, and there they would have their wrists cut, each of them. And of course Leviticus tells us that life is in the blood and they would put their arms together so that the cuts of each would bind to each other, the life of one flowing into the life of the other; another picture of that oneness.

Then they would take a rope and they would wrap it around their wrists in a figure eight. That figure eight was a picture of the everlastingness of that covenant. And it was in this humbling position, standing between the dead halves of these animals, standing there with their arms together like this, and the blood of one flowing into the blood of the other, that they would say their covenant vows. Many times people have asked me, “Wayne, will you do a covenant wedding.” And I have had to explain that I’m not exactly sure that’s what you want me to do. Instead of a white dress, it might be better if the bride wore a red dress. It might work a little better. But that’s the way they would say their vows to each other. It was sobering. They understood that to break that vow resulted in death.

But you see, that was what was going on in the cultures, but this was something that God did that was different with the Abrahamic Covenant. It’s such a beautiful picture of His grace to you and me. God put Abraham to sleep and God and Abraham did not walk between those two halves, each making a pledge to the other. That did not happen. There were no vows said back and forth. Abraham was asleep, and God walked between the halves. It was just God that was walking between the halves. Now, the Abrahamic Covenant was then totally unique to anything their culture understood. It was not based on Abraham’s faithfulness to God; it was based on God’s faithfulness to Abraham. And this made all the promises of the Covenant, which are clearly stated in Genesis 12 and 15, totally dependent upon the faithfulness of God: not the faithfulness of man, which meant they were “yes” and they were “amen,” as it says in Corinthians of the promises given to us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God promised three things to Abraham: this is what was in that Covenant. One, He promised him a land; two, He promised him a seed, and that seed would be the Lord Jesus Christ in Galatians 3 tells us so clearly; but thirdly He promised him a people, a nation. It would be through that nation that the seed would find His humanity.

Now this nation inherited a land, this land was involved in the promise to Abraham, and every person who was circumcised entered into that same Covenant. And so God was faithful to keep His promises of giving them the land. The mark again was circumcision. So the land that the people had entered in chapter 4, it would seem obvious to all of us why they would have their males circumcised, because they were going into the land that was promised by God. You see, God is faithful to protect them. God was already faithful to prepare the way for them because this was a part of His Covenant promises to Abraham.

Now, when they were circumcised, this was their way of saying to God, “We will obey You. We will live as Your people. We will live as Covenant people to the living Jehovah God.” And once they took upon themselves the mark of the covenant, circumcision, now they were prepared for battle, because they’re walking with their covenant partner into this battle. And it’s God, as you’ll see later on, that is going to be their warrior. He’s going to be their victor as they pursue that which He had promised to them in the Covenant He gave to Abraham.

When we present our bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ, you see, it’s the same thing. When we want to walk in the life that God has for us, we have to present our bodies as living sacrifices just like it says in Romans 12:1-2. We deal with the flesh of our heart—they dealt with the flesh externally; we deal with the flesh internally—and when we choose to say yes to Him, as it says in Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly and

acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service of worship.” And then He gives a condition: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” why: “so that you can prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” So that you, in other words, can walk in the light that He promised you can have. You can enjoy what God says is yours.

So a time of renewing the covenant. If you're here this morning and you're not living this way but you're a believer and you're not experiencing His light, you're not experiencing His joy and His peace and His patience and His love which is the fruit of His spirit produced in your life, then God says, “Renew your covenant.” Renew your covenant. Go and deal with your flesh, deal with the flesh of your heart, make sure that you have bowed before Him and you have yielded to Him. Present your body as a conduit, as a living sacrifice and then you now are ready for battle. You are ready to pursue and to enjoy that which God says is yours in Him. It's the same thing.

Before we go into battle, we have to have our covenant renewed; not redone, it's already been done. When you entered into Christ you entered into covenant with Him. You entered in the way of death, but now that we're believers, we have to have it renewed if we're going to walk in the victory He says is ours. So their covenant was renewed. What a picture for you and me.

Their consequence was removed

But the second thing is that is so beautiful here, is the consequence was removed; their consequence was removed. Let me explain that. Evidently when they circumcised the males in obedience to God's command, immediately they were set free from the consequences really of their parents' sin of which they had never repented and had not yet been circumcised themselves. And it's a sad history about their parents. You see, this young generation that was going into battle was not circumcised, they had not renewed their covenant. They were a disgrace because of their parents, yes, but also because of their own unwillingness to be circumcised. This was brand new. And there was a consequence upon them.

Look at verse 6: “For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord, to whom the Lord had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised, for they were uncircumcised because they had not circumcised them along the way. Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.” And then look at verse 9: “Then the Lord said to Joshua [watch this carefully now], ‘Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.’” Gilgal had the idea of a circle or something that rolls, and so that was the word Gilgal. The phrase “rolled away” means to take something away. It's like a heavy weight taken off somebody. I love the picture. If you've ever walked in sin you know exactly what he's talking about. The disgrace, the shame, having been a Christian but yet turned away and done things your own way and now you have to bear the consequence of that. And He says it was rolled away.

The Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates it “to put away,” to put away, to take away never to return again. The reproach of Egypt; you see the word “reproach” is the word meaning “blame, scorn, disgrace.” They were bearing the disgrace and the shame and the scorn of Egypt. Now what is He talking about? You see, their parents had so turned their hearts back to Egypt, this is a sad story, I mean, this is what they inherited. Their parents had turned their hearts back to Egypt. When Moses was up on the mountain and God was giving him the Ten Commandments and he didn't come down and he didn't come down and he didn't come down, then what did they do? They went back to the pagan idolatry of Egypt and they built the golden calf.

This second generation had to live in the shame of what their parents had done. Once they obeyed God, once they renewed their Covenant with Him, all the shame and all the blame and all the disgrace was rolled away from them. They had broken out of that which had so deeply shamed them for so long. They had simply obeyed God, they had renewed their covenant.

Now, let me ask you a question. If you don't understand this, let me throw it at you this way: if you're not living as a believer, if you're not living yielded to Christ, people at your work, people in your family, people in your neighborhood, they already know what you're like, because you're not living a yielded life to Him, you're not experiencing the life He wants to produce within you. And because of that, if it's me, if it's you, if it's any of us, then there's a disgrace which comes to the name of Christianity. All of us have seen this in past months and years of people who claim to be Christians and then they live a different way and it brings shame and it brings scorn down on the Name that we represent. But when we come to that place that we're willing to deal with that sin, when we come to the place of renewing our covenant and saying, “Oh, God, we have sinned and oh, God will You just take our life and use us, we're yielded to You,” all that reproach and all that blame and all that scorn just is rolled off of us.

And I'll tell you what, when that happens, now you're ready for battle. There's nothing that's going to mar your testimony, and your life is now surrendered to Him, and you're ready for whatever comes your way. One of the ways the enemy gets to us the quickest is when we have a chink in our armor. When we have a weakness in our life that we've not dealt with, and when the world can find that out they'll exploit it and it brings disgrace and shame back upon us. But when we renew our covenant and we're yielded back to Him, fully yielded as much as we know how, and we're willing to obey His will and His Word, that's when the shame and reproach of

the pagan world that we've bought back into is rolled away and now we have a testimony. Now we're ready to serve Him.

They did something else. To celebrate this new found freedom that they had, they celebrated the Passover. This is the third time it's recorded that the Passover had been celebrated since it first originally was instated. Verse 10: "While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho." They celebrated the Passover. Now, just do some thinking. In the New Testament it tells us in 1 Corinthians 5 that Jesus is our Passover. And so what they're doing and when we have the Lord's Supper, we're celebrating the Passover, we're celebrating our salvation. We're celebrating what He did for us on the cross, to deliver us.

Well, you know what the Passover was in the Old Testament: the Passover was the celebration of them being delivered from the death angel over in Egypt when the people were in captivity and God said through Moses, "Set My people free." And Pharaoh would not do it. There were ten plagues and the last plague was the death of the first born. And God told them in such a marvelous way, He said, "All of you get a lamb; I want you to sacrifice a lamb." Two and one half million people sacrificing a lamb, do you think that might have smelled a little bit different that day? And the guards that were there thinking something was really going on in that Hebrew slave camp. And they celebrated the Passover. Not yet, this is the making of it. They celebrated the eating of the lamb and they killed the lamb and put the blood over the door post and each one of them had to partake of the lamb. And as the death angel came in, here they were satisfied with the lamb and the blood protecting them. Such a picture of salvation. The death angel moved down the street and all the houses that had the blood on the door post, they were spared, they were passed over. And it was a picture of them being delivered from Egypt, from the bondage they had in Egypt.

And of course God parts the Red Sea and they come through. And this Passover was a memorial to them. But do you realize what's happening here? They have renewed their covenant, and if you put this into a new covenant language, what it is, is you and I celebrating our salvation so that we can renew our covenant. And then they would eat of the fruit of the lamb. Verse 11: "On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year." The unleavened bread was attached to the Passover Feast. That was when you got rid of all the leaven, which was a picture of sin. And it's such a beautiful picture to you and me.

They ate of the first fruits. We have of the first fruits of the spirit, that's what Paul identifies us as in one of his epistles. He says, "We that have the first fruits of the Spirit," in Romans 8. And what he's saying is, "Hey, when you renew your covenant with God and all the shame is rolled off of you, and you celebrate your deliverance from sin to begin with, and then you begin to partake of the first fruits of the Spirit, that's what it's all about. And that's when you're getting ready for battle. That's when Jesus is being Jesus in you, and nobody can touch that which God is doing in your life. Such a beautiful picture of a Christian life we see pictured here in Joshua.

So their covenant was renewed. I just thank God that He lets us renew our covenant over and over again. How many times in my life I've had to go back and renew my covenant: Deal with the sin that has brought shame in my life; deal with the sin that has brought disgrace in my life. And then celebrate the fact that I'm even saved, and then partake of the first fruits of His Spirit, the things that God wants to do in my life that's far beyond what I could ever produce myself.

Their captain was revealed

So the covenant was renewed, their consequence was removed. But here's the one: here's the one. Their Captain was revealed. When we renew our covenant, and when the consequence of disgrace and shame is rolled off of us and we begin to partake of our Passover, the Lord Jesus, when we begin to experience the first fruits of what He produces in our life, then people don't see us, they see Him. Our captain is now revealed, just like He was to Israel. Look at verse 13: "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked and behold a man was standing opposite him [look at this] with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us or are you for our adversaries?'" I would have said the same thing! This is the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. He is being visited by God Himself.

This is what you call a theophany. You know, Jesus has been around a long time. Before there ever was a beginning He always has been. He's God! And this is a picture of Jesus appearing in the Old Testament. And He shows up with a sword in His hand. The Divine Captain is ready to lead Israel into battle. Just like when they got to the river, what was the first thing that went into the river? The priests who had carried the ark: the Ark! God led the people through the river and now their mighty Captain has come to lead them into the spiritual battle that they're going to have with Jericho. Joshua was just a follower, remember?

And by the way, it's all about God, it's not about us. I hope you understand that. All we need to do is renew our covenant, partake of our Passover, enjoy the first fruits of what He produces in our life, and the rest is history, because Jesus takes over. Now it's Him in us.

Verse 13: "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked and behold a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand and Joshua said to him, 'Are you for us or are you for our adversaries?'" Look how He

answers it. "And He said, 'Neither.'" I like that answer. He didn't really answer that question, did He? He said, "I didn't come to take sides, I came to take over." Look what He says, "No, rather I indeed come now as the Captain of the Host of the Lord."

You know what I'm so grateful for? I'm so grateful that when I renew my covenant, and the world and all hell is coming against me, I can say to my Captain, "Oh, Lord Jesus, will You take over? I can't handle this, but You can." And He begins to be revealed in my life. And what is it that brings fear to people that would do you and me spiritual harm in our life? It's not us. It's Christ in us; it's our Captain being revealed. Joshua shows his followship, "And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and bowed down and said to Him, 'What has my Lord to say to His servant?'" In other words, it doesn't matter; the answer is yes. He's ready to hear whatever God tells him. "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

And verse 15: "The Captain of the Lord's Host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet.'" Now, you ought to know that by heart by now. Chapter 1, every place that your sole of your foot steps upon. Get your shoes off! The priests, when they stepped into the water, the sole of their feet stepped and touched that water. And He says, "Remove the sandals from your feet for the place where you're standing is holy." "We are standing on Holy Ground." On holy ground! We've already sung this. Do we understand it? It means we're standing surrendered and obedient unto God.

"Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you're standing is holy' and Joshua did so." He did it. He didn't ask any questions, he didn't in any way fight this. He did what God told him to do. No question of who is in charge: the Captain has shown up, and He's the One that's going to lead the people into battle. As we seek to possess the life that God has given to you and me, we have got to understand that He and He alone calls the shots. He is our life, but He also is our Warrior. The moment we think we can do it—and I'm telling you, this is what the flesh deceives us into thinking—the moment we think we can do it and we don't need our Divine Captain living His life through us, is the very moment we're going to fail. He's our Divine Source, He's our Divine Warrior.

Now I want you to turn to a place in the New Testament to show you how this works out in our covenant. Look over in Ephesians 4:24. I'm going to show you something here. After verse 22 he's said take off the old man, and he speaks of the behavior of the old lifestyle. Verse 24, Look what he says, "And put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." Now what is that new man? That new man is Christ in us. Put Him on, put Him on; take the other off and put the other one on. And, by the way, don't measure your life of taking something off and saying no to sin. If you're only saying no to sin you're still living under law. When you're saying yes to Christ, you're putting on the new garment, and that's a big difference. That what grace says: say yes to Christ; law says say no to sin. And if all somebody is doing is saying no to sin, they're just moving from one addiction to another. But when you say yes to Christ, that's when you're actually taking a garment off and putting a garment on, but you're putting it on from the inside out.

I don't know about your Bible, but chapter 3 comes before chapter 4 in mine. Sort of happens that way. He tells you how to put on the new man in chapter 3 if you'll look in verses 16-17: "He would grant you a prayer according to the riches of His glory [which 3:8 tells you are unsearchable], to be strengthened with power through His Spirit [but look where it happens, look where the dressing takes place] in the inner man." Now, understand, religion says do it from the outside in; Christianity says inside out.

When I did some meetings in Salt Lake City, Utah, some converted Mormons came to me and said, "Wayne, I finally understand. We wore a garment of righteousness every day when we'd get up underneath our clothes. We'd put it on from the outside. But what you're saying is, and what God is saying is, that we can't put it on from the outside. Jesus has to dress us with it from the inside out."

Verse 17 tells you exactly how it happens: "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." That little "so that," I don't know why it's there, because it makes it look like where 16 has to happen in order for verse 17 to take place. But if you'll look at the Greek, it's not that way. It's Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith. The "so that" comes later on. Here's my point: Christ dwelling in your hearts—katoikeo. Kata means down, oikeo means dwell or home. Down home. When you renew your covenant, when you come to that place of surrender, you let Jesus be "down home" in your life. Have you ever been someplace that you didn't feel welcome? You've gone over to their house and you think you're going to break something and they've got all the doors locked and you can only go in one room.

That's not what he's saying here. We were in a little town in Mississippi, and it's in the middle of nowhere. And there was a house we were staying in, and that house was big and it had a lot of bedrooms. There were some people that we knew very well and we were doing a meeting there, a revival. And the music fellow and I went in and when we pulled up, at the basketball goal, they had two big sticks laying against the goal. You say, "Wayne, what's that got to do with anything?" Listen, he had a mean dog. I took one stick and he took the other stick and we beat the dog off of us getting into the house. I mean, they thought of everything. We got inside the house, they had about seven bedrooms, and they said just help yourself. We played musical bedroom there for awhile. We just swapped around to see what the different bedrooms were like. And we'd walk into the kitchen and there was a big old glass of iced tea. Oh, son! And then there was either a coconut cake or a pound cake, but I'm not talking about the dry kind that gags you! I'm talking about the kind, you put it on your forehead, and your tongue will slap your brains out. I mean, it's good stuff! They knew what we liked! They had the remote over there by the television set and had a little list of channels and how to work the remote. And

I'm thinking, "Man, this is down home!"

I was so "down home" while I was there. One night, they were getting dressed for church and I was sitting on their bed while they were getting ready to go to church. Now that's being home in somebody's house! That is exactly what this verse is saying. You want Jesus to be Jesus in your life? You want to renew your covenant? You want to step into the power that God can do in your life? You let Him be "down home" in your life: every area of your life.

"How do you do that, Wayne?" He says through what: faith. Isn't it amazing how we keep coming back to that? What is faith? Focus on Him and consecrate your whole life to Him and say yes to Him, and when you do, He becomes the garment that you're dressed in, and people don't see you anymore, they see Jesus being Jesus in your life. You say, "Wayne, why did you go to that? We've already talked about renewing your covenant." I'll tell you why. Go to chapter 6 now, verse 10. He's going to talk about the battle, just like Joshua is talking about the battle. I want to show you something. How many times I've bought these books on spiritual warfare and I wake up in the morning just so confused that I don't know what to do. It says I've got to put on a helmet, oh, and that's right, and I've got to put on the belt and the breastplate and,... Listen, that's not it at all! Somebody has made a lot of money confusing the whole body of Christ. Look at verse 10, "Finally, be strong [Where?] in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God," which means don't leave off a piece, "so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil," here's the battle, "for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you'll be able to resist in the evil day and having done everything to stand firm."

Look at verse 14: "Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in addition to all taking up the shield of faith with which you'll be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God."

Now, I want to show you something that maybe you've never seen. When you renew your covenant with God and the disgrace and the shame of living like a pagan rolls off of you and you become usable to God, the garment, the garment of chapter 4, Christ in you, now listen to me carefully, is the armor of chapter 6. There's nothing new that you need to do. Once you have Him on, you not only have your life on, but you have your armor on. He is our armor. You say, "Wayne, I don't believe that." I'm so glad you said that!

There's a prophecy of Jesus in Isaiah 59. Let me show you some familiar words, verse 17. "He," speaking of Jesus, "put on righteousness like a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on His head, and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle." And what he's saying is He is the loins girded about with truth, He is the breastplate of righteousness, and He is the helmet of salvation. That's why chapter 6 in Ephesians comes after chapter 4 and after chapter 3.

Here's what I'm trying to tell you: when you renew your covenant and the shame and the disgrace is rolled off of you, your Captain is now revealed in your life. His character is revealed through you, but He is the armor to face any spiritual battle that you have to face and you don't have to worry about it. He doesn't give you victory, He is your victory.

"So Wayne, I want to learn now. How is it that we prepare for battle?" Well, first of all you've got to enter into the life. But you renew your covenant with Him, you come back to the place of surrender to Him, and when you do, all that disgrace—you may still have consequences in your life—but His mercy will help you bear up under. But you're free to be usable again, and all that disgrace rolls off of you. But not only that, He is life and Him being your Captain and Warrior is revealed within you. And that's what brings fear to others, not you, but the Christ that lives in you. He is our Divine Captain.

One illustration that I want to share. Darlene Rose gives her testimony of how she was on an island that the Japanese controlled in World War II. She was a missionary in a compound. The Japanese came and took the men and put them on the death march and her husband died on the death march. Well, she was left alone with a group of ladies there in a compound, I mean, totally vulnerable to whatever the cruel war would do. And they had a man who would be a servant to them that came every day. And one night they heard the Japanese coming. They heard them coming. And they, of course, are not known to be real nice to you, and so they began to get on their knees. And Miss Darlene said, "We got on our knees and we cried out to our Divine Captain and we said, 'Oh God, we cannot defend ourselves, you're going to have to defend us. We don't know what else to do. We make ourselves available to You.'"

They said the men surrounded the place and suddenly there were shouts like they had never heard and the men dispersed and ran away. And they couldn't understand what happened. After the war, when they could go back to that compound in that area, they found that young man that they felt like had probably told them, which was that servant boy, and they said, "Did you tell them that we were there by ourselves?" And he said, "I did, they paid me." They said, "We don't care about that; why did they run, why did the people run when they got there? What happened?" And the man said, "You didn't see it?" They said, "What?" "They said that when they got there suddenly they saw the biggest men they had ever seen in their life, with sword in their hands, dressed in white. They

were huge and they completely encircled the whole compound and they all ran in fear.”

I want to tell you something, folks, they didn't see it, they didn't even see it, but the world saw it. When we walk renewed in our covenant, dismissed from the disgrace and shame of living lives that aren't befitting to a believer, then our Captain is revealed in our life. And that's what makes the world tremble. They don't see us, they see Him, and brother, we are ready for battle.

Joshua 6a

A Victory in Jesus

Turn to Joshua 6. We're just about to enter in to the first battle: Jericho. Joshua 6, we will not finish it today, we'll not get into the battle, but we'll get right up next to it. We're going to talk today about victory in Jesus. Remember the song? Boy, what a great song if you understand what it says; "Victory in Jesus." Wonderful song. Victory is not something we go and get, victory is something we already have. We're going to see that today: victory in Jesus.

Now isn't it interesting that our spiritual battles do not even begin until we're bowed and yielded before Christ. Do you understand that? You see, there are no battles in the wilderness. For you to understand what's going on here and why we're looking at Joshua and what in the world can we bring out of Joshua, you have to realize that when Israel came out of Egypt, out of bondage, four hundred years they were in slavery in Egypt, when God parted the Red Sea, they came through the Red Sea, that is a picture, a type, to you and I in the new covenant of our salvation. See, the covenant with Israel was external: ours is internal. But it's a picture of our salvation coming out from under the bondage that we lived under, that sin held us under.

But when they went into the wilderness, that's the first place they entered once they crossed the Red Sea, that is a picture. You see, for 40 years they wandered in the wilderness confused, disillusioned, factioned, divided, and what that's a picture of is a believer who chooses not to walk by faith; not to yield to Christ. It's just a picture, but we can get a beautiful picture out of that. But when we come to that Jordan River, that's like a circumstance that God moves into our life; we didn't plan it, we didn't ask for it, but suddenly the rivers are flooded and we don't have any answers. And God takes us to that experience, not because of the experience, but to teach us how to possess the life that God has already given to us. We're not even thinking about the life, perhaps we've been in the wilderness, but perhaps God now has us backed up into a corner to the point that now we have to trust Him. And when we trust Him, immediately we possess, we experience the life that we already have. We enter Canaan.

Now Canaan to them was a land obviously, but to us it's not heaven. Many people picture, "I'm going into Canaan land" as if it's heaven. No! No! There are no battles in heaven; I hope not. There are no battles there. Canaan is a picture to you and me in our covenant of the life that we have in Christ. Entering and possess that which God says is already ours in Christ. Again, they had a land, we have a life.

Well, Israel, all they had to do when they got to the Jordan River was just obey God. And Joshua was their leader; he obeyed, they followed him, and they walked over and entered what they already had. Now, if you're there, if you're bowed before Christ, if you're yielded to Him, and maybe it's taken a traumatic, Jordan-flooded river in your life to get you there, but now you're there, now is when the battles begin. There is no battle again, when we choose to walk after the flesh; we're just in bondage. There's no battle, there's no fight: we've given in. And we're living just as if we don't even know Christ. But when you come to walk in Him and say yes to Him, that's when the battles begin.

Now the last time we were together, we looked at how they prepared for battle. First thing they did, their covenant was renewed. Now you've got to understand, this generation, second generation, their Mamas and Daddies and all, they died in the wilderness because they just wouldn't obey God, but this is a new generation. They said they were going to say yes to God. "We're not going to do like they did." But they had not been circumcised. And the external covenant, the physical covenant that God made with Abraham, the land, the seed, the nation, in that covenant, circumcision was a sign, a mark of that covenant. This brought disgrace upon them since they were not circumcised. This was the sign of the covenant.

Now when we choose to live after the flesh, it's the same thing. When we choose to live after the flesh, we bring the same disgrace upon us that they brought upon themselves. And we have to come back to renew that covenant, when we come back to say, "Yes, Lord." When we come back to yield to Him, maybe it's a circumstance that brings us to that point, but at that point, then we have renewed our covenant. Romans 12:1-2 as we looked at the last time. Now once their covenant was renewed, the consequence of that covenant was released; it was released. What do we mean by that? We mean that the disgrace was taken off of them, the reproach, the shame that came upon them for not having their covenant renewed, not being circumcised was taken away.

Now, you and I when we come back and do the same thing, we renew our covenant, the disgrace that we have brought on the rest of the family of God who are seeking to walk yielded to Christ, the disgrace we've brought upon our own selves, and the disgrace

we've brought upon the name of Christ, that's removed. We're released from that now. And we're useable again. And I'll tell you what: that's one of the greatest messages of grace that you can talk about, the "agains" of God's grace. He lets us come back and renew our covenant. He lets us come back and say yes to Him and that disgrace be shed from our life and to say yes to Him once again.

Well, with our covenant renewed and the consequences released, then their Captain was revealed. And I loved that because, see, with us in the spiritual covenant of the new covenant, when we say yes to Christ and we renew our covenant, then what happens is Jesus is being Jesus in us. And people see our Captain, we're under the Lordship of our Divine Captain, and He's revealed in our lives.

Joshua went up to Jericho. He wanted to see the city now for himself. He sent two spies, they came back. He was there 40 years before, but this is sort of new and he wants to make sure he gets a little better feel of what they're up against. Jericho stood in the way of them taking the land that God had given to them. And while he was there the Divine Captain appeared to him. I love this picture. That's Jesus in the Old Testament if you don't know that. That's Christ in the Old Testament. It's a theophany. A theophany is when Christ appears in the Old Testament. Remember, He always has been, always been the Son of God. He came to earth to be the son of man. But He's God; He's eternally God. And He appears to Joshua in that Old Testament there at the city of Jericho, and when He did He had His sword in His hand, drawn. And I love that. What He's saying is, "I didn't come to take sides. Get behind Me, get your shoes off, I'm leading you into battle. I am your warrior."

I love that! Just like He led them across the Jordan River. You say, "Wayne, He did not!" Yes, He did. What was the first thing that went into the river? The Ark. What's the Ark: the picture of the presence of Christ, of God with the people. And now, here He is in the first battle, and He says, "I'm leading you into battle." He always goes before us. He is our Warrior. He's our life and He's our warrior. When we yield to Him, our covenant renewed—and how many times, by the way, let me just ask you a question; how many times in your walk with Christ have you had to come back and renew that covenant by confession of sin, repentance, and saying, "God, I'm wrong and You're right and I yield to You." Anybody besides me have to do that in your walk? Isn't it awesome that He lets us do that? Isn't that awesome? He doesn't kick us out of the family of God. It's His goodness and kindness that leads us to that place. Now all the shame is off of us even though they're consequences, He still gives us mercy to bear up under them.

But not only that, people look at us and they don't see us any more: they see Christ. They see a divine life in us, but they see a Divine Warrior in us. And I want to tell you something: it's Christ in us that makes the world tremble. It's not what we say, it's not how many people we have in church, it's that we bow before Him, and the living, almighty God takes over our life. And the world trembles because they can handle us, but they can't touch Him that lives within us. He is our victory. He is our divine warrior. And that's what we're going to see today: victory in Jesus.

Now listen, we don't work toward victory. Many people think that. Been watching the NCAA Regionals, and I've been watching some of those games that are won on the last shot. We're going to win victory, shoot, and the buzzer goes off and the ball goes through the hoop and they say, "You win!" That has nothing to do with Christianity. You don't have to win it, you don't go get it, it's been bought for you. Jesus is our victory. We don't move to it, we move from it, we walk in it. When it's no longer Wayne, but it's Christ, that's what victory is all about. He is our Victor. The victory has already been won. And we can live in it if we can say yes to Him.

God disarms the enemy

Well, three things I want you to see in this wonderful passage of Joshua 6, and by the way, we'll get right up to Jericho, but we won't quite go in. Next time will be thrilling. First of all, God disarms the enemy. Now how does He give us the victory? What's this victory like? Well, He goes and disarms the enemy. In Joshua 6:1 it says, "Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel. No one went out and no one came in." And then verse 2 the Lord tells them why, "The Lord said to Joshua, 'See, I have given Jericho into your hands, with its king and the valiant warriors.'" You see, they already knew from word of mouth that the enemy had melted in their hearts; that they were terrified of God. How did they know that? Well, when the two spies went over, Rahab, the former harlot, the one that God had brought to Himself, that protected them, she told them. In Joshua 2:9 it says, "I know that the Lord has given you the land and that the terror of you has fallen on us and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard it our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you. For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."

This had to encourage these two spies, so they run back to Joshua and they give him the message in Joshua 2:24, "They said to Joshua, 'Surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands. Moreover all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us.'" So they knew this, word of mouth. Then, when the Jordan River backed up 17 miles to the city of Adam, and God dried up the river bed, and two and a half million of them crossed over, Joshua 5:1 says, "Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard how the Lord had dried up

the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.”

And now we see in 6:1 that they’ve shut the city up. They’re scared to death. They won’t let anybody come out and they won’t let anybody go in. Why? Because of the sons of Israel; the God of the sons of Israel, really. What we studied last week: it’s not just the sons of Israel, it’s their God, and it’s their Warrior that scares them half to death. Now fear gripped them. You see, God will disarm the enemies of our life. Now, what’s an enemy? An enemy refers to those who seek to take from us what God has given to us. He gave them a land, so the enemy was to take away from them what God had given to them.

What is it in our life? What is the enemy of a believer in the New Covenant who’s dealing with internal things, not external things? What is the enemy that we face? Well, the biggest enemy that you or I face every day is what we look at in the mirror when we get up in the morning. Hate to tell you that, but when you look in the mirror in the morning, that’s the biggest problem you’re going to have all day. Our flesh is our biggest enemy. But I want to tell you something; when Jesus came to live in us, He has already disarmed it. He has disengaged its power. In Romans 6:6 it says, “Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him in order that our body of sin might be done away with.” Now, that little phrase “done away with” in the King James is translated “destroyed.” What in the world does that mean? Does it mean when Christ comes to live in me I’m never going to have to deal with the flesh again? No, the word is *katargeo*. It means to neutralize, to shift into neutral. When you take a transmission of a car and you shift it into neutral, the power of that transmission hasn’t been diminished, but it’s been disengaged. That’s what happened when Christ came into our life. He disarmed public enemy number one. He disarmed the enemy of the flesh.

Now, we also have to deal with the world and we have to deal with the devil. How do you put that into the equation? Well, the world, one of the words for “world” is a system. The devil has mined this world’s system with his traps. When you get up of a morning and walk out of your house or turn the TV on, it’s a minefield. And the devil has infiltrated, he’s infected everything around us. We’re aliens down here, we don’t belong here, we’re just passing through. We’re heaven-bound; we’re citizens of another kingdom. But while we’re down here, we have to remember that it’s a dangerous, hostile world to everything that we represent. And the devil has mined it. He can’t be at every place at one time. He’s not omnipresent. That’s why he has to prowl around. You wouldn’t have to prowl around if you could be everywhere at one time. Job talked about that. He has to walk to and fro across the earth. He was the creation who rebelled and fell. So the devil, we don’t have to worry about him, but what we have to worry about is the world that he has infected and we have to be careful because the flesh is addicted to everything that’s in this world.

I hear people say, “That man is addicted to drugs, and that man’s addicted,” no, no, no! You misunderstand. The flesh is totally addicted to sin and the world is full of the traps that seek to lure us into it. Now for instance, when we studied Galatians 5:19-21, we saw some of the addictions. We saw the fact of sexual addiction, immorality, impurity, sensuality. I mean, flesh is addicted to that. That’s why we have to make sure that the Lord Jesus is ruling in our life. When He’s ruling, He’s disengaged its power. It has no affect on us whatsoever.

Also, spiritual addiction, that’s idolatry and sorcery in verse 20 there. And what he’s talking about is a false sense of what worship is. We’re sensual beings, we love to feel good when we do anything that we do, and we fall into the trap of thinking that’s worship. It’s an incredible misunderstanding of it, but yet that’s what the flesh presents and that’s an addiction. Another addiction is the social addiction. We always want things our way and therefore what happens is when we’re walking in the wilderness and we’re not walking under the power of the Spirit, what happens is that enmities develop; that’s hostilities. And everything begins to flow from that. Do you realize a believer, myself, you, whoever we’re talking about who is not walking by the Spirit, cannot relate properly to anybody? Why? Because he’s so self-centered he can’t see anybody but himself. Enmities, strife, jealousy, outburst of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, that’s all addictions of our flesh. Our flesh is only satisfied when these things are there, because we want it our way and that’s the way it is. Our way or the highway.

And the next one is sensual addiction. Our flesh has no knowledge about what real joy is unless the Spirit of God produces it. So therefore we look for it in the wrong places: drunkenness, carousing, and all the other stuff that is there. But you see, our victory over these addictions is to not stop doing them. Oh man, when I was growing up, that’s what everybody told me, “Don’t do this, don’t do that, and don’t do this.” Nobody every told me what I could do, they told me what I couldn’t do. And I have found something. If you are only saying no to the addictions of your flesh, you’re simply moving from one addiction to another all the time. You have never seen victory yet.

Saying no to sin is not the answer alone! Now don’t hear me wrong. Law says, “Say no to sin,” grace says, “Say yes to Christ.” Now, if you’ve understood me, then you’ve already got it. When you say yes to Christ, you’ve just said no to sin. But you don’t focus on the sin, you focus on Him. Why? Because He’s our life and He’s our warrior, and when you focus on Him and yield to Him, then He disengages, He disarms the enemy, public enemy number one and we can walk in the victory that He already has for us. He is our victory. Our victory is Christ.

Now sometimes along the way we have to deal with people who will not walk the way they ought to walk. I used to say if it wasn’t for

people I could live the Christian life. Have you had any days like that? I mean, you kind of want to have a hit list. "Lord, if you get rid of these ten people, we could have revival." And God said, "No, I have them there so you can have revival. You have to learn to let Me love those people through you." But sometimes, people can come at you. Paul said, "Watch out for Alexander, buddy, he gave me a lot of problems." Named him and told people what he did. And evidently this guy must have frustrated the apostle Paul. But here's the key: when we yield to Christ, He disarms those people as they come at us to take from us what God has already given to us. God is disarming them. He's disarming them.

Philippians 1:27, Paul mentions this. And he says, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." Wouldn't that be a great testimony, if people could say that about us? But then in verse 28, "In no way [now watch this] alarmed by your opponents." Oh, you mean we're going to have opponents? Well, yes. They're either going to be lost people that the devil has full control over, or they're going to be saved people who won't come out of the wilderness. You're going to have opponents. But he says, "Which is a sign of destruction for them." What is? The fact that you're not alarmed; the fact that there's no fear in you whatsoever. He says, "But of salvation for you, it proves your salvation and that too from God." And what he's saying is that when you let Jesus be Jesus in your life, He is your divine warrior. He disarms your opponents. You don't even know it. You're not aware of it. But He's closing their mouths, He's stopping them short.

Why? Because they look at you and see that you're not afraid of them and that puts fear in them; not of you, but of the God that lives in your life. It's exactly what we're seeing in Joshua. It works the same way in our covenant, exactly. This is why it's sometimes more helpful to go to the Old Testament to find out what God is saying to us in the New Covenant. God in us disarms the enemy. When the church of Corinth began to raise up, and Paul realized this is going to cause some problems, because the first leader was the leader of the synagogue there where a Jewish man got saved. And Paul was concerned. And God came to him and said in Acts 18:10, "Paul, I'm with you. I'm with you." That's enough. That's all He had to say. And then it says, "And no man will attack you in order to harm you for I have many people in this city." "I'm watching over you, boy, don't you worry about it. I'm your victor. You just say yes to me. Don't you be concerned about the opposition. You focus on Me. Don't be concerned about the sin, be concerned about the Savior and let Jesus be Jesus in your life." And God disarms the enemy.

So again, in 6:1-2, that's what He's telling Joshua: "Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel. No one went out; no one came in." And then God tells him, "The Lord said to Joshua, 'See.' I love that. I love what we sang, "Open my eyes." God, open our eyes. I know, I can't sing, but open our eyes. But when you open your eyes, He says, "Joshua, do you see? I have given Jericho into your hand with its king and its valiant warriors." Victory is Jesus. Our victory is Jesus. Next time you ever sing that song, "Victory in Jesus," remember what you're singing: That if you'll say yes to Him, He's conquering even when you don't know there's opposition out there. He's covering, I mean, He's all around us at all times. That's who He is. If you don't get excited about this, this would be a great day to get saved, that's all I've got to say. This is who lives in us in a hostile world that could care little about God and particularly a nation that anybody who mentions Christianity or Christ and they try to come against you. Jesus said, "Don't you sweat that! I know what's going on around you. I'm your warrior, son. I have disengaged the flesh and power. I've conquered the world in your life because I've conquered the devil and all the opponents around you."

God determines the events of our life

But secondly, not only does He disarm the enemy; God determines the events of our life. He determines the events. You never know what's next, do you? Somebody asked me one time, "Wayne, if a crystal ball worked, would you like to have one?" And I told them, "Heavens, no! I don't want to know what tomorrow holds. Do you? I'm having enough trouble today. Let's just take one day at a time." I don't want to know. But you see, God doesn't let us know. And I think that's a beautiful thing. Every circumstance and event in your life is determined by God. God's in charge of it. And what happens is that we've got to understand that they're not going to be the same. Oh, we'll learn from one and we'll learn from another. But they'll never be the same. It will never be at a point that you can coast through life. God has a way of orchestrating events to where we have never seen those events before.

We don't know what our battle will look like and we don't know the plan that God has to be conquering in our life in the battle. We don't know what His plan is. That's why we have to walk by faith the way we do. Now, for instance, you could look at the Jordan River. Why the Jordan, why springtime? Because He had a point; He had a purpose. And that purpose was to teach them to walk by faith. But Jericho wasn't a river, Jericho was a city. And Ai, which came after that, wasn't like Jericho. You see, it's all different and you have to trust Him in each one to do what He says. He determines the events of our life.

His ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts, and Isaiah 42 says He will not share His glory with any man. So when you think that you're smart enough to handle it, back off, and say, "Whoops, missed that one!" And get before God, because only God and He wants the glory for what He does.

Verse 1 again says, "Now Jericho was tightly shut." Now here's Joshua in plain view of Jericho. Here's the Divine Captain that has come to meet with him, and He's told him, "I didn't come to take sides, I came to take over." Now, he's looking at this impregnable

city, I mean, this is an overwhelming city. It's the biggest battle they'll ever have in the whole land of Canaan.

Now let me tell you about Jericho. Jericho had two walls around it. The city itself was built on what they call a tel, a mound. And the way they would do that is that every civilization, like somebody that would inherit Jericho after so many years it would go down, they'd come in and they'd level it, they'd pile dirt on top of that old remains, and they'd build a new city. There are some places in Israel that have 16, 17, 18 different levels where cities have been there. And archaeologists, that's the way they discover who was there and when they were there. Well, it was on a tel. Jericho had two walls around it as I said. The tels and these walls, the ground outside the second wall was downhill. They would exaggerate those tels or mounds. They would put more and more dirt because an enemy coming after them would have to batter the door, the gates down. And having a battering ram running uphill was a whole lot harder than running straight in. And so they would exaggerate those things. The first wall was fifteen feet high.

Now the ground between the first wall, still going up, and the second wall, was made out of some substance that is very similar to what we have today in plastic. It was slick: you couldn't get a foothold. And so between the first wall and the second wall was no footing at all and it was an incline, and then the second wall was twenty feet high. So here's Joshua, standing there with the Captain of the Divine Host, looking at this city: two walls and he's probably thinking to himself, "Oh, man. This is overwhelming, I need to go get the battering ram, and I need to go get some ladders to climb these walls." But God had other plans.

And Joshua had learned from experience, being with Moses when God parted the Red Sea and being there when God backed the waters of the Jordan River. He had learned one thing: that God has a plan that I guarantee you Joshua knew he couldn't come up with. It would be by faith that the walls of Jericho would fall. You say, "Where's that in Scripture, Wayne?" Well, I'm glad you asked. In Hebrews 11:30, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days."

If you watch some of these learning channels that are supposed to be so academic, they don't even know the latest piece of architecture that's been found in Jericho and that is a wall that had a window in it and a house behind it. Guess whose house? Rahab. They said that because Rahab was living on the wall, her house was on the wall, and the walls came down, that it automatically made the miracle and the whole thing that happened in Jericho a joke. They don't even know the latest piece of information. But the Word of God says you don't even have to go there. You just go to the fact that they trusted God and God brought them down. He parted the Red Sea, He backed the Jordan River up 25 miles, and the walls came down because they did what God told them to do.

Now listen, faith is dying to your understanding. This is what kills us. Our minds are our biggest battle. That's why in Romans 12 it says, "Have your minds renewed." You need to learn to think a different way. Faith is dying to your own understanding. You don't all the time understand what God tells you. Half of the time we don't understand the circumstances He allows into our life, much less how to deal with them. So we have to remember that when you trust God and what He says, it may not all the time make sense. Verse 3 He says, "You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. Also, seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Ark."

Now if you look up rams' horns it's a different word than normally used for that. Yes, it's a ram's horn, but it has another word for it; a special word. It's a technical word that means "jubilee horns, jubilee trumpets." How many of you remember when I talked about jubilee in here in Leviticus 25? Some of you do. Seven periods of seven years called sabbatical years, up to 49. On the 50th year, that was a special time. It was in the land of Canaan that this was to take place. When you're over in the land, God gave the land to different tribes and He said that at the end of that 50th year, or when that 50th year comes, you go back and reclaim your land. If somebody has bought your land between that time, it goes back to you. It reverts back to you. You get to reclaim your land. Now think of how significant, do you see what's going on here?

The people were not allowed to say a word. Seven priests carried seven trumpets in front of the Ark and all you could hear was that haunting sound of those trumpets as they walked around. Two and a half million people, nobody saying a word but the priests out in front blowing the rams' horns. What they were saying is that they were proclaiming jubilee. They're coming back to take the land that God had given to them. This was not a military campaign, this was a spiritual experience of reclaiming what God said was already theirs.

Each day, once a day, for six days they did this. Can you imagine the people inside? You say why didn't they get up on top of the walls and shoot arrows at them? I'll tell you why: they were terrified. Their hearts had melted, we've already seen that. They were afraid to get near it. Can you imagine hovering on the inside of that city? Thinking, "Oh, no! It's coming, it's coming." And all they could hear was the sound of those trumpeters blowing the rams' horns as they walked around once each day for six days.

On the seventh day, "Lift up your heads oh ye gates," Psalm 24:7 says, "and be lifted up oh ancient doors that the King of glory may reign, may come in." This was not the most common battle. Joshua 6:4: "On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times and the priests shall blow the trumpets."

You say, "Why seven times?" If you've ever studied the history of Israel, seven is a very special number to these people. It's very significant. It represents completion or perfection. In Genesis 2:3 God rested on the seventh day after creating all creation, and then in Genesis 12:1-3 there are seven promises in the Abrahamic Covenant. In Exodus 37:17-24, there were seven branches on the golden candlestick in the tabernacle. And there were seven feasts, and there were seven years to make up a sabbatical year, and there was the Sabbath and there were three of those feast of the seven that were in the seventh year. Seven, seven, seven, seven, seven. Why? Again, the number seven—and this is so important here—proclaims to the Jewish mind God's ability, listen, to finish what He has started. Boy! I love that, I love that. God starts but God finishes.

Joshua 6:5 says, "It shall be that when they make a long blast from the rams' horn and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat and the people will go up every man straight ahead." Oh, that long blast of that trumpet, and the people just shouting. Can you imagine two and a half million people shouting? That would be loud. And when they did the walls fell down flat.

Now remember, it was build up on a mound, and when you went up normally, you'd have to go uphill, but when those walls fell obviously it would have to fall this way, but when they fell flat, what it's talking about is that they filled up that gap and now the people could just go straight in, whereas before they would have had to go uphill. God had just prepared the way.

Well, God had disarmed the enemy, and God had determined this event. What event is next in your life? You don't know, I don't know, what's next in my life. God determines that. But in that event they'll be a specific wisdom that God will give me to walk through it. It's not the same as the last event I went through. We can never rest on the laurels of the victories of yesterday because today is a new day, a fresh day. We have to do today what God tells us, not necessarily what He told us yesterday. It may be a little different. This is where God gives us discernment in our Christian walk, in the internal Covenant that we're in. We don't always have a verse that fits everything. Usually it will cover it somehow. But God will give you discernment of how to treat this situation and that situation because this one's a Jericho and that one's a Jordan River. And this is an Ai, and they're all different. But to walk by faith is the bottom line.

Well, no man could come up with anything like this, by the way. This is part of the being in "boot camp" down here on earth. Everything we go through down here is just preparing us to rule and reign with Him one day, so remember that. We're just in boot camp. We're in a quarry and He's conforming us into His image.

God details the event

But then thirdly, not only does God disarm the enemy, not only does He determine the experience, but thirdly God details the event. God is the one who details it. Since God determines what is going on, then He details it. And when I say details it, He gives you specifically how you're supposed to walk. That's what wisdom is: the ability to take God's Word and make it practical in any given circumstance of our life. Everything must be done according to what God's Word says. He and He alone has the plan.

Well, it's time to move. Verse 6, "So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, 'Take up the Ark of the Covenant and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Ark of the Lord.'" Now the armed men were to go in front of the priests carrying the Ark to protect it. And you'll see later that they're also right behind it. They're surrounding that Ark to protect the presence of God. Verse 8, "And it was so that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Lord went forward and blew the trumpets. And the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord followed them. The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets and the rear guard came after the Ark," there are your two armed groups there, "while they continued to blow the trumpets."

Now again, just imagine; God told Joshua to tell the people and the people were doing exactly what God said to do. That is key. You see, you've got one man who's willing to follow God and you've got a group of people that are willing to follow that man. They're doing exactly what God told them to do. The priests are blowing the jubilee trumpets, but the people were silent. Until the seventh day, verse 10, "But Joshua commanded the people saying, 'You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard nor let a word proceed out of your mouth until the day I tell you, "Shout!" Then you shall shout.'"

Verse 11, "So he had the Ark of the Lord taken around the city, circling it once. Then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp. Now Joshua rose early in the morning and the priests took up the Ark of the Lord. The seven priests," verse 13, "carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the Ark of the Lord went on continually and blew the trumpets. And the armed men went before them and the rear guard came after the Ark of the Lord while they continued to blow the trumpets. Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. And they did so for six days." The exact thing.

And verse 15, I love this! "Then on the seventh day." And that's next week's message. I just want you to know that! "Thanks a lot, Wayne!" We're right up to it, but we don't have time to get into that. Next week's message.

Let me just go over what I've said. God disarms the enemy. When you experience His life in you, that's when the battle starts, but

don't worry about that. Keep your focus on Him; He's already disarmed the power of the flesh, He's already disarmed the world in its allure, and He's already shut the devil down. So don't worry about it. You walk in the victory He has for you.

God directs the event. No matter what events are going on in your life, the Lord determines the event. He determines what it's going to be. I have no call in that. Somebody said, "Wayne, what if something happens to you?" Well, it just happens. I don't know how I'm going to go out of this world, but I know where I'm going when I leave! But then, thirdly, God details the experience. I mean, it's got to be step by step. He calls every shot and we've got to walk in oneness and yieldedness to Him.

Let me close with this illustration. In a previous church we had business meetings that sometimes could be real hostile. And you know how they could be sometimes, people would come that hadn't been to church in 25 years and probably didn't know Jesus from a hole in the ground. But they'd come to a business meeting, because it beat watching wrestling on television. I mean, it was going to have a fight at the church, let's go see who wins. And we were buying a piece of property that was quite a bit of money, and we were going to relocate. So it was a big deal. And this one man had threatened. Oh, how they loved to threaten.

He said, "I'm going to make enough noise and enough mess in that business meeting, that nobody will vote for that thing." He'd threatened us. Really. Big time. I mean he was a powerful man in the church and had said what he was going to do and, boy, we got on our face the day before and I said, "Oh, God! I don't want this if You don't want it, but we believe You've led us to it." I hadn't taught Joshua, wish I had. I didn't realize God had gone way ahead of me. The next day we had the service and everything. Then we had that special called meeting. And I got up in front of them and we made the proposal, a beautiful job that our men had done, and then I got up, and I said, "Are there any questions?"

That's where it would come out. And nobody said anything. And I'm looking right at the guy who had threatened us for weeks that he was going to ruin what we were doing. He just sat there. So I thought maybe his hearing aids were turned off. So I said, "Are there any questions?" Twice; nobody said anything. So I began to sense what was happening without even understanding this passage. That God had gone before us and wired that old boy's mouth shut!

Third time I said, "Are there any questions?" Nothing. I can't begin to tell you how hostile this situation was. Forth time, and now I'm enjoying it! "Are there any questions?" I know now what God has done. Nobody said anything. And the fifth time I said, "Are there any statements, questions, anybody want to do anything?" Nothing. That thing passed. I can't wait some day to go back and see what it looks like.

What I'm telling you is that God had gone before us. You do what God says to do, and don't you worry about your opponents, my friend. God will disarm them so fast it will make your head swim. If He has to wire their mouths shut, He will. Whatever it needs. And if He chooses that it's our time to go out of here, we'll go out in a blaze of glory. So it's a win-win situation all the way. Just say yes to Jesus and walk in the victory He gives to you. That's what it's all about.

And that's what He told the people and Joshua. And that's our message today.

Joshua 6b

Recipe for Trusting God

Well, you can turn to the book of Joshua, and you're wondering what I'm going to do. Well, this is not what I'm going to do normally, but it's what I'm going to do tonight. What I want to do is to summarize some of the things we've been talking about now for several weeks in the book of Joshua. I'm going to call it the Recipe for Trusting God. I'm going to take the six chapters that we've looked at and I'm going to put them together a little differently. It's going to be the stuff we've studied, and yet it's going to be put in a little bit different way.

We've seen several go through the waters of baptism. Now, baptism is only a picture of what happens at salvation. Baptism doesn't save us. It's an act of public witness before others. "Buried in the likeness of Christ; raised to walk in the newness of life." Now, baptism is a testimony to the whole world that we're different people. We're brand new creatures. Romans 6 is the picture of what's happened to us. We're brand new creatures as 2 Corinthians 5:17 say, "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a brand new creature." We now have His life in us.

My favorite illustration is one I've used of the white cloth and the bowl of red dye; we used it this weekend. You put that white cloth in that dye, but not only is the cloth in the dye, the dye is in the cloth. And that's a beautiful picture of what salvation is and how that Christ comes to live in us.

Now these that have gone through these waters have life within them. Not because of the waters, but because prior to this they received Christ by faith. But how do they appropriate the life that they now have. And that brings us back to Joshua. And for all of us

tonight, the victories of yesterday never determine the victories of today. We need to be reminded that of this over and over again.

In our study of Joshua what we've been doing, we've been talking about how Israel possessed the land that God had given to them. Now, God didn't give us a land. We don't have an external covenant, we have an internal covenant. He gave us a life—not a land, but a life. Now how they possessed what God said was already theirs is the same way we possess what God says is ours in Christ Jesus.

Now tonight we are going to go through and, like I said, put a little more succinctly those first 6 chapters that we've studied, and we're going to talk about trusting God. What does it mean; the recipe for trusting God? We are breezing through Joshua, much quicker than I like to go through a book and I'm sure you like it better, but I'm a little slower than that. But I want to make sure we are getting it; we're holding on to it and so I want to do this. Paul said in Philippians 3:1 "Finally, my brethren [and I love this verse, I'm going to put it somewhere in my house to remember it], rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again, is no trouble for me, and it's a safeguard for you." So I'm not going to write it to you, I'm going to speak it to you. But to speak the same things again is no trouble to me, and may be a safeguard for you and encourage your life. What have we learned in Joshua about trusting God?

Trusting God is believing in Him

First of all trusting God, we have learned, is believing in Him. Now in chapter 1 God speaks to Joshua, now Moses is dead, and He says, "Moses my servant is dead." Verse 2, "Now, therefore, rise and cross this Jordan, you and all this people to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place in which the sole of your foot treads I have given to you just as I spoke to Moses."

Now as we remember, and as we've studied, the significance of "I am giving to them" vs. other passages where He says I have already given it to them, is very, very important. What He's talking about is: I have given it to you, yes, but you will not experience it except to the degree that you're willing to walk in obedience to Me.

Verse 3 is really a key. He says, "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads I have given it to you." I am giving it to you: every place on which the sole of your foot treads I have given it to you." That's simply saying, you've got to learn to trust Me. In every step of the way, trust Me. Believe in Me, is what God is telling Joshua.

The sole of the foot was the bare part of the foot, the tender part of the foot. And of course at the burning bush, He said, take your shoes off. In Joshua 5 when a divine captain arrived, he says take your shoes off. The idea is when you take your shoes off, you're humbling yourself before God and you're saying, I'm taking every step in obedience to you. That's the part of it, when we're willing to trust Him, to believe in Him and to consider every step holy unto Him then we walk in the victory, we experience what He said is ours in Christ Jesus. This is the first part, really, of trusting God. Or really what I could have said is the walk of faith—same thing. And that is learning to believe in Him. Allow God to dictate. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead our lives. This is what makes us so different than any religion in the world. Because it's not going to church on Sunday and Wednesday. It's not just that, it's moment by moment, breath by breath, believing in Him.

But along with that, this is all in that first step of believing in Him, there is something else involved: You believe in Him which also takes it a second step in verse 7 which means you're in His word. If you believe in His character and you trust Him, then you're going to trust His word. People that aren't in the word of God, don't trust the character of God. But if you believe in the God of the Word, then you will automatically be in the Word of God.

I had a man tell me one time, "Wayne, you talk about the Word all the time. I think you love the Word more than you love Jesus." I want to be as kind as I possibly can by saying that that's the stupidest thing I think I've ever heard. I'm in love with my wife; she's my best friend. I kind of enjoy hearing her talk. If I didn't hear her talk, I wouldn't know how to please her. Any man who says he understands a woman would lie about anything. I mean, I love her. And because I love her, I want to hear what she has to say.

How many times in our marriage, years ago, we'd be riding down the road and she'd get quiet and I'd say, "What's the matter? What are you thinking?" "Nothing." Raise your hand if that's ever happened to you. Okay, thank you. Thank you! "What are you thinking?" "Nothing." "What are you thinking?" "Nothing." And finally I just have to stop, and we'd get mad over what she's thinking or not because I want to know what she's thinking. I need to know what she's thinking. I love what she says because I love the woman who's saying it.

That's the way it is with the word of God. Can you imagine a believer saying he doesn't love the Word of God! Verses 7-8 put the Word into the equation: "Only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant, commanded you. Do not turn from it, to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go." Then verse 8: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do so according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous. And then you'll have success."

He says you get into the Word of God. You soak in it. It's not just a matter of memorizing it. I know people that have memorized it,

matter of fact, the Jewish people over in Israel, precious people, but they've memorized the Word of God, but they've missed the Christ that's right there in front of them. It's easy sometimes to memorize the Word, but that's not what we talking about. We're talking about meditating upon the Word of God. It's great to memorize it, but it's hiding it in your heart that's much more than just in your mind. It's meditating upon the Word, chewing on it, pondering it. This is why we are going to spend so much time as a church in the Word of God, because it needs to saturate everything that we say, and everything that we are. It needs to go deep inside of our life.

Now does that mean we're going to do everything right? No! But we're going to have a standard within us that's going to tell us what is right. We still have a choice. And many times we'll choose the wrong way. But we need to know what does God say.

The most beautiful illustration I've used, and this is just a little review tonight, has been Abraham in Genesis 22. When Abraham was told some pretty tough things, had he not loved the God of the Word, he never would have obeyed the word. And it says in Genesis 22:2, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I'll tell you."

Do what? I mean, can you imagine? You would have to trust the character of God. This is what the people of Israel are having to learn as they follow Joshua across the Jordan river. "So Abraham" it's in verse 3, "So Abraham!" He didn't flinch, he didn't blink an eye. Do you realize that this is the way we are supposed to be living. All of these that have walked through the waters tonight are saying to the world, "I live a different way, now." What way is that, Wayne? I live by faith. Paul said the same thing in Galatians 2:20.

What does it mean to walk by faith? It means exactly what Abraham did. It's exactly what Joshua and Israel were led to do as they crossed the Jordan river. Trusting God is believing in Him. It's taking every step as being holy onto Him. And we're willing in doing that to die to our own understanding of what we thought God was going to do and where we thought God was going to lead.

"What do you mean, kill my son?" Abraham could have said. I mean, he's the door to all the covenant promises. You kill Isaac, you've just taken away the redeemer of this world because the seed was a part of that covenant. And if you take away Isaac then you have no seed that will one day come on the scene and get his humanity from the nation of Israel. But he didn't say that. It says, "So Abraham." He obeyed immediately. It says in the book of Hebrews that he even believed that if he had to kill his son that God would resurrect him from the dead. He believed in the character of God. That's what walking by faith is. Trusting in God is believing in Him so that we're willing to die to our fleshly emotions.

"Take your son, your only son, whom you love." Abraham could have said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute! Not that son, I love this son. Let me do something with somebody else." No you die to your emotions. You die to your understanding. You die to your emotions. And trusting God is being willing to die basically to our flesh/will. It's saying, "Lord, I'll do it." "So Abraham," verse 3 of Genesis 22. Only when we trust in the character of God, believing in Him, can we receive what His Word has to say, but the two are joined together. It doesn't start with the Word, it starts with the God of the Word, but then the Word of God becomes a part of our life.

The instructions to Joshua and Israel were no different than what He'd told to Abraham in the sense of what they had to do and of how He speaks to us today. People who want more than the Word of God in our day, are telling everybody something. They're telling people they don't love the God of the Word, and they are looking for something different than what they really need in their life.

Now when we're believing in Him there's one more thing that's involved here. It's like a triage. It all comes together, but it's not I'm separating it because for the sake of explanation, but when you say "yes" to God all these things are involved. It happens at the same time. When we are believing in Him, God gives us a knowing, an inward knowing, that He goes before us. Kind of like what it says in Romans 8:28, "for we know," and that's intuitive. That's something God has to give. We "know that God causes all things to work together for good to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose." He puts an inward knowing in our lives. He removes the fear of taking the step once we are submitted to Him and once we are trusting in Him. He removes that fear.

Chapter 2 has told us of sending the spies over into Canaan. You see, he only sent two spies, and those two spies were going to let him know what they were facing when they got to Jericho. It had been 40 years since Joshua had seen it, so he sent these two spies over secretly. Didn't tell the people about it. And those two spies, when they went over what they learned and what happened to them, came back and became a great assurance to Joshua, and it ought to be an assurance to you and I. There's no what ifs. They're going to come back and let him know there's no what ifs when you say yes to God.

In chapter 2 we were introduced to a lady by the name of Rahab. She used to be a prostitute. She is no longer a prostitute; God has brought her to Himself. She has believed in God. She's a convert over in the land of the enemy. God had prepared her to protect His people.

And I don't about you, but that's just beginning to mean so much to me. I mean, some of the things that God tells us to do, and you think, "Lord, that's going to cause a lot of pain." And God says, "Do you trust me?" "Yes, I trust You." "Then you do it." And as you take that step, the fear diminishes and you know He's already gone before you. He's always going before us preparing the way. She hid the spies and protected them while they were there. And later made them promise, "Look I watched after you, you watch after

me.” And certainly they did that. But it was through Rahab that they learned that the enemy was already terrified. That the victory was going to be a piece of cake, if they’d just obey God. They didn’t know that. But now they know.

In Joshua 2:8, “Now before they laid down, she [Rahab] came to them on the roof and said to the men, ‘I know that the Lord has given you the land and that the terror of you has fallen upon us and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.’” When we walk by faith, you see God always gives us that assurance. We don’t need a Rahab in another land. We don’t need the spies to come back and tell us. We have the Holy Spirit that lives within us. But God assures our heart if we’re willing to say yes to Him no matter what it is He tells us to do, because we trust Him, we know somehow He’s already prepared the way. He’s gone before us.

So if we are going to possess the life that God has given us in Christ, it starts with believing in Him. That’s part of the recipe of trusting Him, is believing in Him. Believe in the God of the Word so that you can receive the Word of God. And when you do He’ll give you the assurance that you never had known before. You know that God causes all things to work together for good. You know that He’s gone before you.

Now, that’s the first thing that we’ve looked at in Chapters 1 & 2. You say: Wayne, you didn’t cover everything. I told you I’m not going to try to cover everything. I’m trying to put in a succinct way so that everybody can get a handle on it. Because every day of our life the line is drawn in front of us as to whether or not we are willing to say yes to Christ. Situation by situation; I’ve said that how many times since I’ve been here, and that’s the way it is in my life. I don’t know what tomorrow holds. I don’t want to know what tomorrow holds. I just know who holds tomorrow. And when I get there I trust Him, and I trust His Word. And we’re willing to say yes to Him, therefore, we know He goes before us.

Trusting God is clinging to Him

But the second thing in the recipe of trusting God that we’ve been looking at in 6 chapters in Joshua is: clinging only to Him. Clinging to Him. You say, “Wayne, what do you mean by that?” Hang on, I’ll tell you.

The river Jordan was flooded. Now you remember this, we’ve studied it; at a time when they were supposed to cross over it, it was flooded. Chapter 3:15 tells us, “And when those who carried the Ark came into the Jordan and the feet of the priests carrying the Ark were dipped in the edge of the water,” and then he says, “for the Jordan overflowed all of its banks, all the days of harvest.”

Now this is interesting, God didn’t let them cross the Jordan when it was at a normal time. At normal rate it would be about 100 feet wide and that wouldn’t be that big of a deal. But on a flooded time, at a harvest time, when the snows have run off of Mt. Lebanon and had come down and have flooded the river, it was at a mile wide. Can you imagine! It’s a big difference in 100 feet and a mile wide. Why did God do that? This is so beautiful, and I don’t know if I can get it across. The older I get the worse I’m getting at getting it out like it gets in. I hope you’re seeing this. God creates circumstances in our life that are overwhelming, flooded rivers if you please. Why? Because He’s trying to teach us to cling to Him, and to do that He has to remove all options.

You see, over in Romania, when I was going those years, they had a saying, “When Jesus is all you have, that’s the only time you realize that’s all you need.” Because we have Plan B, Plan C, Plan D, Plan E. I mean, even if we don’t like the church we’ll go someplace else. We’ve got all kind of plans over here. But one of these days, God’s going to put a flooded river in front of you and in front of me, if we’re honest about our walk with Him, that’s going to drive us so much to the end of our self, there is no other option. And if you’re going to cling, He’s the only option you have left. And in clinging to Him, that’s when you realize what trusting Him is all about.

Listen, I’ve done it over the years. I’m a “tape-ite” and a “book-ite.” Over the years I’ve listened to this person’s tape and that person’s tape and this person’s book and read that person’s book and try to get as much in me as I possibly could. You know how much it meant to me? About this much. Oh, I had information. You wouldn’t believe it, if you asked me any question, I had the answer. It didn’t mean anything to me until God put me in situations from time after time and almost log them down to when I had to cry out to Him and then suddenly all that information dropped down into the right slot and transformation was the result.

God has to put us in situations to where we don’t have any options left. The flooded Jordan River was not a spiritual battle. How many people think that every circumstance in their life is a battle? It’s not a battle. It was simply—not a result of some sin they had committed; no—it was a circumstance that God had created because He wanted His people to learn to cling to Him.

I love that word in the New Testament. It’s like glue. Glue themselves to Him. There is no other option. Oh God, if I let go of You, there’s no other hope, there’s no Plan B. Well, God will put us in those type of circumstances. God orchestrates life to drive us to the place of desperation to where we cling only to Him. Then and only then, trusting Him, believing in Him, clinging to Him, like I said, makes all the sense in the world. It is then that we won’t flinch.

Abraham did not flinch. God has a way of bringing us to those places of trusting Him. And we step out into the waters of His will, at

that moment He proves Himself strong. The flooded Jordan River stood between them and all that God had for them. What stands between you right now and what God has for you? You've heard it and you know it. Was it a song that said, "I'm tired of being stirred and never being changed." Have you heard that? And that song goes over in my mind. Those words: "I'm tired of being stirred and never changed." What stands tonight between you and everything that God says is yours in Christ Jesus? What circumstance has He orchestrated in your life?

Chapter 3 tells us about the Ark of the Covenant that was to go out in front of them. In other words, they were not going to be alone. We looked at the Ark and we saw how it was made of acacia wood which was a picture of the humanity of Christ. It was almost impenetrable. It was a hard, hard petrified wood. But not only that, it was overlaid with gold and that was the picture of His righteousness. A beautiful picture of His divinity. A picture of the God-man.

Not only that, we saw within the Ark there was the golden pot of manna. Did that grab you all when we were going through it? Did you catch what He was saying here? The Ark is a picture of Christ that lives within us. The golden pot of manna was a picture of His divine provision. He is our bread of life. "When do I ever get to know that, Wayne?" When the river get flooded. You see, I'm not going to partake of Him when everything is going well, there's money in the bank, everybody's healthy, everything's going sweet. God has a way of driving us to this truth. But in Him, He is the bread of life. He's the one who sustains; He's the one who satisfies. He's the one who is sufficient for everything that we need. There's nothing outside of Him that we need, but we don't know that until the river gets flooded. We don't know that until we walk into the valley of the shadow of death. It's in those times that we learn what these truths really mean.

Also, in the Ark was the budding rod of Aaron. Beautiful picture behind that, we preached on that and I'm not going to go back and do that again, but the rod itself pictures the incarnation and the death of Jesus Christ. The bud pictures the resurrection of Christ. And the blossom, the flower, pictures the exaltation of Christ, and the almonds, the fruit that it produces, pictures the reproduction of Christ as He reproduces Himself in the lives of those who trust Him.

The tables of law were also inside the Ark. But over them was the Mercy Seat, and I love this picture and maybe I didn't bring it out strong enough when we went through it. Our failure is always apparent, but covering our inability is His ability. The Mercy Seat sat on top. Every day of my life, I'm reminded of what I'm not. How about you? How are you doing? Are you reminded of what you're not? What happened in your life today that you wrongly responded to and found out real quick what you're not? And in that desperate moment you came before Him and said "Oh, God, Your Word convicts me, Your spirit convicts me." God's blood covers you. Over your inability is His ability and His cleansing power in Your life.

The Ark was a beautiful picture of what we have in Christ and the Ark went before the people as they went into the Jordan. God said I'm not going to create this circumstance and not be with you, I'm going to walk through it with you. But until we believe Him to the point that we cling only to Him, we don't experience His provision in our lives the way He wants us to experience it.

Israel, like us, had to learn that life's circumstances teach us to put feet to what we say we believe. When the rivers are swollen is when He tells us to move. And that's when we trust Him. And that's when we experience Him in a fresh way. When they trusted God's character and they believed God's Word, they yielded to His will, they experienced His power like never before.

Would you not like to have been a flower on the wall, if there's a wall there, but a flower somewhere and watched as those priests put their feet in that flooded river. I just have that kind of mind, and my mind just goes crazy thinking what that would be like. Mel Gibson helped me out, just to put your step right out and touch that water. Flooded banks, and all of the sudden that water rose up. Whoosh! You can't see it, I'm sorry. You all just need a life. That's all I've got to say. That thing rose up and backed up 17 miles and the river would have been muddy. Why? So they could walk across: two and a half million of them. But they had to be willing to step out into what they did not understand. They had to be willing to step out into that which was overwhelming to them in order to experience what God said they were going to experience.

That's the beautiful thing about trusting God. Trusting God involves believing in Him, but it also involves clinging to Him when life is overwhelming. And letting His word richly dwell in your hearts. Stepping out in His will. That's what walking by faith is. If you ever hear me saying, "walk by faith," here it is in the first 6 chapters of Joshua. Trusting, believing in Him, and clinging only to Him. Glued to Him and to His word. There's nothing else.

Trusting God involves obeying Him

But thirdly, trusting God involves obeying Him. We've been hitting around it, but let's go ahead and say it. Chapters 5 and 6 tell us about the battle of Jericho. Now Jericho was the biggest battle that they would fight. Isn't it interesting, God could have taken the smallest battle and put it first and worked them up to it, but He put the biggest one first. It stood right there blocking the pathway to the central highlands there. It stood in front of them threatening to take away from them the rest of all that God has given to them in Christ.

Isn't it interesting, you have an experience in your life, you didn't even know that you hadn't experienced God in a particular way and God is so good to us He puts some pain in our life. He brings us to the end of ourselves and we cry out to Him and oh, we see Him like we've never seen Him before.

The next thing you think is, "Oh God! I don't want to ever move away from here." But the biggest thing that's going to stand in your way now is your Jericho. There's a Jericho looming in front of us. To us our Jericho is our besetting sin. Every one of us have a besetting sin.

I want to take a little test tonight. If you'll take out a sheet of paper, I want you to write it down and sign it. NO! There are a lot of people who do not think they even have one. It's incredible! You have a besetting sin. Here's the unique thing about it: all of our besetting sins are not the same. That's why you see people hammering people who have the sin of immorality that's their besetting sin.

Oh, man, the Pharisees and the bigots love to hammer them. They don't understand it. They deal with pride or it might be covetousness or it might be another sin, but all of us have a besetting sin. It's a Jericho that looms in front of us and God says there's so much more. Oh there's so much more! But you've got to learn to deal with your Jericho first.

Now the Jericho's not like the Jordan. The Jordan was simply a circumstance to teach them how to trust God. The Jericho was a spiritual battle. Once you begin to experience Him, that's when the warfare starts. That's when the battle begins. The only thing that threatens us to our possessing the life that we have in Christ Jesus is our besetting sin. The Jordans of our life teach us how to trust God, and it is then we began to possess what He's given. But it's the Jerichos of our life that threaten what we've just experienced. Just as we trusted God in our Jordan experience, we must trust Him in our Jerichos.

We must learn, however, to distinguish between the two. We've got to distinguish between the two. Even though the answer to both of them is the same, we've got to learn to distinguish between the two. When you have a bad thing happen in your life, you don't run and say, "Have I done something wrong," unless God convicts you of it in your spirit.

Do know the difference between conviction and condemnation? Condemnation is when you have no hope, that's condemnation. That didn't even come from God. Conviction always has hope in it. And a lot of people, they have a bad trauma, the rivers got flooded and they're overwhelming to them, and they think it's because of something they've done wrong. Not necessarily. It could just be a Jordan in your life to lead you into a deeper understanding of who He is. But the Jerichos are plain and clear. We learn to distinguish between the two and this will help us greatly.

We saw in chapter 5 people had to be prepared for this battle. It's amazing how getting into the land has a lot to do with being prepared. Once you're in the land, everybody has a different mindset. First of all, they had to circumcise the men first. This was to renew their covenant with God. You see it says in 5:3, "At that time the Lord said to Joshua, make yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel, the second time. So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath Haarolath. And they became a disgrace."

You see, they had become a disgrace to the covenant God had made with Abraham and when He told them to be circumcised in the 17th chapter because they hadn't been circumcised, they were living in shame. Circumcision was a mark of the external covenant.

It says in Chapter 5 vs. 9, "Then the Lord said to Joshua, today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." The moment that they renewed their covenant was the moment that God took the reproach off of them. They were no longer a disgrace and shame to everything that He stood for. Once this was done, then their Captain was revealed in their life. If you followed the flow of chapter 5, that's when the Divine Captain showed up. That's Christ in the Old Testament. Christ appeared to Joshua and had his sword drawn ready to lead him into battle. Just like He took them through the Jordan, He was going to lead them into battle.

They just simply shouted and that shout has a logical meaning. You see, they shouted "Jubilee, Jubilee!" We're coming back to take the land God says was rightfully ours. But only when they renewed their covenant, and their approach was taken from them, was their Captain revealed.

You see, that's the way it is in our life. If I'm going to be ready for battle, tomorrow, it's the same way I got ready for battle today. And how's that? Renew my covenant. "What covenant are you talking about, Wayne?" Theirs was external, by circumcision of the flesh. Ours is internal, and it says in the epistles that we've been circumcised of the heart. In other words, the flesh has been rendered powerless in our life and our renewing of our covenant is bowing before Him and presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable before Him, which is our reasonable service of worship. And not being conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind. That is a renewal of our covenant. And when we renew our covenant, then all the shame that we have brought to Christianity and to other Christians by the way we have been living is removed, and at that moment our Captain is revealed in us, and people see Him. They don't see us any more.

We don't overcome sin, but Christ overcomes us. And sin is defeated. When you realize it is no longer Wayne, but Christ in Wayne, then the victory is already been won over the Jericho in my life. You can't say yes to Christ and say yes to sin at the same time. Saying yes to Christ is saying no to the Jerichos of our life. So it's not so much that we deal with the Jericho as we deal with God and we get our heart in line and in tune with Him. It's then we walk in victory that He has already given to us.

So trusting God involves believing in Him. Not just believing Him, but believing in Him. Trusting His character. It involves yielding to Him in the midst of unbelievably difficult circumstances. "Oh God! I have no Plan B. I'm clinging to You. You are my plan. You are my circumstance. I'm going to cling to you." And it involves obeying Him no matter how strange His will seems to be. We obey Him.

Somebody sent me this, and I love illustrations that you all send me. Thank you! Keep them coming. Some of the funniest things you've sent me I have laughed my head off. Don't stop them either. But I love these profound illustrations. You all come across and you send them to me and they just minister to my heart. One of them I want to share back with you. It's about the ant and the contact lens.

Brenda was a young woman who was invited to go rock climbing. Although she was very scared, she went with the group to a tremendous granite cliff. In spite of her fear, she put on the gear, took a hold of the rope, and started up the face of the rock. Well, she got to a ledge where she could take a breather, and as she was hanging out there, the safety rope snapped against her eye and knocked out a contact lens. Well, here she is on a rock ledge with hundreds of feet below her and hundreds of feet above her. Of course, she looked and looked hoping it had landed on the ledge, but it just wasn't there. Here she was far from home. Her sight was now blurry. She was desperate and began to get upset. So she prayed to the Lord to help her find that contact lens. When she got to the top, a friend examined her eye and her clothing for the lens, but there was no contact lens to be found. She sat down despondent, waiting for the rest of them to make it up the face of the cliff. She looked out across the mountain range, range after range of mountains, thinking of the verse that says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth" and she thought, "Lord, you can see all these mountains. You know every stone, every leaf, and you know exactly where my contact lens is. Please help me!"

Finally, they walked down the trail to the bottom. At the bottom, there was a new party of climbers just starting up the face of the cliff. One of them shouted, "Hey, you guys, anybody lose a contact lens?" Well, that would be startling enough, but do you know why the climber found it? How he found it? An ant was moving slowly across the face of a rock carrying the contact lens on its back. That's what caught his eye.

Brenda told me that her father was a cartoonist. When she told him the incredible story of the ant, the prayer, and the contact lens, he drew a picture of an ant lugging that contact lens with the words, "Lord, I don't know why you want me to carry this thing. I can't eat it. And it's awfully heavy, but if this is what you want for me to do, I'll carry it just for you." Then there was a note at the end of that email. I think it would probably do some of us some good to occasionally say, "God, I don't know why you want me to carry this load, I see no good in it, and it's awfully heavy, but if you want me to carry it, I will."

God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called. He is my source of existence and my Savior. He keeps me functioning each and every day. Without Him, I'm nothing, But with Him I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I thought to myself, I couldn't sum it up any better. That's what the Christian life's all about. Sometimes we feel like that ant carrying a load we haven't got a clue why we have to carry it. But because we believe in Him, we've learned to cling to Him, and we've learned to obey Him. That's the way we experience what God says is already ours in Christ Jesus.

What's on your back tonight? What's the river that's flooded that awfully heavy and overwhelming in your life? And God's saying to you, "I love you, I love you, the pain is to draw you to Me. I want you to experience Me like you've never known Me before. And that's Joshua chapter 1 through chapter 6.