

Joshua Sermons-Joshua 7-24-Wayne Barber

Joshua 1-6 Sermons

Joshua
Commentaries

Joshua 7 Sin in the camp

We're going to be in Joshua tonight again, in chapter 7. Joshua 7 is a tough chapter. Always enjoy the encouragement Joshua brings, but tonight is going to be more of a challenge to each of our hearts. When you teach through a book, you take it as it comes. We're going to talk tonight about sin in the camp.

Now let me review a bit for you. The book of Joshua is such a powerful picture of how we possess the life that we have in Jesus Christ. We've been going to school on Israel. As Israel possessed the land God gave to them—it was an external covenant; it was a land—we learned from them. As they learned how to possess the land God had given them, we learn how to possess the life that God has given us in Christ Jesus.

The last time we were together, we talked about chapter 6. In chapter 6 we watched as Israel seemed to obey God in everything that He said. In their first battle against Jericho they had an awesome victory. I hope you're seeing from this study that the battles don't really begin until you start yielding to Christ, seeking to live a cleansed life, allowing Jesus to be Jesus in you. There really aren't any battles if you're not living that way.

When we choose to live after the flesh, and all of us do from time to time, when we choose to do that, we are just really putting ourselves back into bondage and we become prisoners of our own choices and that choice is basically, "Lord, I want to please me, not You."

Jericho was the biggest battle that they would have in possessing the land. It's amazing to me that He put it first and not last. He didn't work them up to it. He puts it right there in front of them. That's the biggest battle that they would have.

Our biggest battle—when we seek to live and possess the life that God has given us in Christ and walk in the newness of life as Romans 6 talks about—our biggest battle is the besetting sin that plagues all of us. Yours is different than mine. We're all different in besetting sins that we have to deal with. That's the biggest battle that we have to deal with—that sin—and have it cleansed before God before we can go on and possess what's already ours in Christ Jesus. Until sin is dealt with, we cannot enjoy what God has given to us.

There have been many times in my life, and I'm sure in your life, you've gone through those dry periods when you just weren't experiencing the joy and you weren't experiencing the love and the peace that God gives to you. And I know now why: because of sin somewhere in the life. As long as it's not dealt with, as long as it's not being cleansed by the blood of Jesus daily, then we're not enjoying what God has given to us.

In chapter 6 the people were told to march around the city once each day for six days. There was to be no sound. Only the sound of the trumpet. Now that trumpet was a shofar, a ram's horn, but it was the Jubilee trumpet. What this was was a sound of victory. The sound of their anticipation of going back and possessing what God had already given to them. On the seventh day they were to walk around the city seven times, and then when they heard the trumpets, they were to shout. And we studied the chapter together, we saw what happened. The walls came tumbling down.

I thought tonight, you'd like to hear what that shofar sounded like. Jonathan has a shofar and he's going to come up here and play for you what that sound is like. It's a ram's horn. But we want to hear that horn. This is the horn that they were hearing. No sound amongst the people. Just this horn.

I wanted him to play that for you tonight because I want you to get used to it. In my understanding of eschatology and scripture, the next time we hear that horn what's going to happen? We're going up to be with Jesus. So get that sound down real clear in your mind. Thank you so much, Jonathan. That just adds so much to me when you can hear. That's the only sound they could hear as they walked around that city seven times on the seventh day, and then they shouted and the walls came tumbling down.

Well, for all appearances, Israel had obeyed God fully. I mean, the walls came down, they possessed the city. Everything happened the way God said it was going to happen. But chapter 7 is going to show us that there was a man who sinned and how his sin affected the whole nation of Israel.

We're living in a day, and I think you'd agree with me, that we take sin so lightly. We call it everything but sin. In this day we live in

this message to me is so needed. We don't seem to realize that sin doesn't just affect us. Unconfessed sin doesn't just affect us, it affects everybody around us. This is the thing people don't seem to understand. We're not an island unto ourselves. We're a part of the body of Christ.

The joy of their victory over Jericho was short-lived because of the sin of one man. Two and a half million people were affected by one man's sin. It was done in the shadows. It was done when nobody was watching—he thought—but it affected the whole nation. It's amazing how sin will take you further than you ever want to stray—ever heard that before? —keep you longer than you ever intended to stay, and cost you more than you ever dreamed you'd pay.

Three things about sin we're going to see in chapter 7. And when we say sin, it's not just the act, it's the unconfessed act, particularly. All of us are going to sin until Jesus comes back, but if that sin is not confessed, if we're not dealing with it, it has an effect and this is what we want to see.

Sin is a betrayal of our covenant with God

First of all we see that sin is a betrayal of our covenant with God. I don't know how you think about sin, but you need to be thinking about it this way. Verse 1 in chapter 7, "But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban. For Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah took some of the things under the ban, therefore, the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel."

Now the ban that he's talking about there, just to review a second, we've talked about in 6:18- 19: "But as for you, only keep yourself from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban and make the camp of Israel a curse and bring trouble on it." The whole nation was commanded this way. Verse 19, "But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the Lord. They shall go into the treasury of the Lord." Every living thing in Jericho had to be destroyed, and no soldier could take anything that was valuable because it was to be given to the treasury of the Lord.

Now that was pretty clear. The whole nation understood the command, but a man by the name of Achan just couldn't resist the temptation, and he took of the valuable things that were under the ban. And it says he deceived his brothers. In other words, he didn't tell a soul. He acted in a very deceptive way. As a result, his thievery there, his covetousness, affected the whole nation of Israel. Once again notice the very last part of verse 1, "therefore the anger of the Lord burned," not against Achan, but against what? "the sons of Israel." You think, wait a minute. Achan's the only one that sinned, why would it be against the nation of Israel? You have to understand, Achan's sin was an offense and there would be a severe consequence for that sin. But God was not just upset with Achan, he was upset with the whole nation of Israel. Now why is that? See, the whole nation of Israel as a unit was in covenant with God.

This is so important for us to get down, because we're not a nation any more, we're the body of Christ that was affected by the new covenant. We need to hear this. The covenant was made with Abraham. Circumcision was its sign in Genesis 17. That was the outward sign. It was an external covenant. And that was on the part of the body that passed the seed on to generation, on to generation, and it set them apart from other peoples in the world. Now this covenant was passed on to Isaac, his son, and then it was passed on to Jacob, the younger of Isaac's two sons, Esau and Jacob. And Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and Israel had 12 sons, and there's your 12 tribes of Israel.

Now you know the history of this. You know that the mommas and daddies of this group that we are studying in Joshua, they had died in the wilderness because they were disobedient. Part of their disobedience was they never had their children circumcised, the males in their family. So when they crossed the Jordan River, they were a disgrace before God because they were no different than the pagan nations of the world. But they were circumcised which renewed their covenant with God after they had crossed the Jordan River. Now they're each one acting under the covenant that they had made with God as a unit. They were a covenant with God, but they were also in covenant with one another. You can't just be in covenant with Him without being in covenant with each other. It becomes a whole here. Each of us is a part of the whole. As a nation, each member had a responsibility to honor and trust God. When one disobeyed, they knew it affected everybody.

Verses 11-12 in chapter 7 show us that the whole nation was guilty because of one man's sin, "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them. And they have taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. And then God said, 'Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their back before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore [God says] unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst.'"

You know, this is a message that I just wish sometimes we could get it to everybody. When do you think we'll ever learn that we're members one of another? Nothing is ever done in isolation. Everything that Wayne does affects you. Everything you do affects Wayne. We affect each other by the way that we live. You say, where is that in the New Testament? I'm so glad you asked that! Romans 12:4. Paul is so clear you can't miss it, "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not

have the same function," he says in verse 5, "so we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members one of another." What one does affects the whole.

There are so many examples of this in scripture, particularly Old Testament. You find in Numbers 12—and I was going to read this, but it's too long. I'll just tell you the story—we find the account of Miriam. Miriam was the sister of Moses and she didn't like his wife. He had taken a Cushite woman, which means that she was of darker skin. You think we just have problems today. There's nothing new under the sun. And she got upset about it and began to sow discord. And God called her out and gave her leprosy. And the scriptures say that because of her sin and her discontent with God and with Moses, that the whole nation of Israel was kept from moving on towards that which God had given them for seven whole days. Perhaps one and a half to two and a half million people were affected because of one person's sin.

We look at David and his sin with Bathsheba, and you see how that had so many ramifications to it. It affected the nation. It affected that family. Uriah, her husband was basically murdered by being put on the front lines so that David could cover himself.

You can just go on and on. But what we learn from this is that we are in covenant with God. We're in the new covenant, based on better promises. We're in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. Because of that, we are in covenant with one another. We are members one of another. We need to encourage each other, hold each other accountable. When you see a brother sin, Galatians 6:1, you go to him. And Matthew 18 talks about the steps of restoration of an errant brother, because sin affects the whole body of Christ.

You break this principle down into smaller increments and it fits because it's true. You take a Christian family. You take a father who's not walking with God, plays the game, makes no bones about it. That sin of that father is affecting the whole family. More than likely he'll have a son grow up to be just like him. Chip off the old block we say. Because of the disobedience of that father, that whole family suffers. When I grew up, my momma's family and my daddy's family they were all alcoholics except for my mother and my dad. And I saw what had happened to families because of sin that was in their life. It's the same principle.

A church is the same way. We're a large church here. We cannot expect God to pour out His blessings in this church—I want to make sure I say that as nicely and as clearly as I can say it—we're not going to experience God's pouring out His blessings when there's gossip and slander and maligning going on. When there's sin in the shadows and people will not confess it, it's going to affect God's pouring out His spirit in the whole of the congregation.

This principle can be taken even further than that. If you have a staff, and we're constantly praying for our staff, that we stay in unity with one another. If you have somebody who works as a secretary, if you have somebody in the music program that's discontent, and will not deal with sin in their life, it not only affects the choir, it affects the church, it affects everything. Everything we do affects the whole. Why? Because sin, in its basic understanding, is a betrayal of our covenant with God. When we enter in the way of death and we said, "Oh God, I present myself a living sacrifice to you. I want to enter this covenant with you through the Lord Jesus Christ." And when we sin, it's a transgression, a betrayal, of the covenant we have with God. That's why it affects everybody to some degree. And the more heinous the sin, the more affect it has on the body. So sin is a betrayal.

Sin cannot be swept under the rug. Boy, how many times in my life have I tried to do that? Sin has to be put under the blood. It has to be dealt with. When one person sins, he departs his walk. He must go back and deal with whatever it is he has departed. It's got to be put under the blood of Jesus. And thank God we're under the new covenant and God lives in us. He's already cleansed us at the cross and wants to cleanse us daily as we come and keep our sins confessed up-to-date. Why? So that we can be vessels that He can use. Why? So that His Spirit can be poured out amongst His people.

Dwight L. Moody gives an account in his autobiography of God's breaking out in a meeting. He says, "I remember one town that Mr. Sankey and myself visited." He's writing this. Mr. Sankey was his music leader. "For a week it seemed as if we were beating the air. There was no power in any of the meetings." They didn't sense the spirit. They didn't sense the power of God. "At last one day I said that perhaps there was someone cultivating an unforgiving spirit." And he says, when he said that, "the chairman of the committee that had set up the revival for a city-wide meeting, who was sitting next to me, got up and left the meeting right in the view of the audience." The arrow had hit the mark and gone home to the heart of the chairman of the committee. He had had trouble and malice toward another one over six months. He at once hunted this man up and asked him to forgive him. He came back with tears in his eyes and he said to Dr. Moody, "I thank God that you ever came here. I thank Him." That night their response room—well we call ours a response room, they called theirs an inquiry room—he said it was absolutely packed out. The chairman became one of the best workers Moody said he'd ever known and was active in Christian work from that time on.

One man held back the moving of the Holy Spirit of God for one whole week until he was finally willing to deal with the sin that was in his life. Sin is a betrayal of our covenant with God and that's why we have failed each other. That's why we need to hold each other accountable. That's why we need discipline in the church. That's why we need encouragement because our sin affects the whole.

Sin is a burden to the whole community of God

Secondly, not only is sin a betrayal of our covenant, but sin is a burden to the whole community of God. Let me take this a step further; as a result of Achan's sin, Israel was miserably defeated when it went to Ai. Joshua 7:2 "Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said unto them, 'Go up and spy out the land.' So the men went up and spied out Ai."

It's obvious here, now this is interesting, that Joshua knows nothing of the sins that has been committed by Achan. It has taken place in the shadows. It has taken place with nobody watching. Joshua doesn't know about it. I've often wondered, in pastoring churches and in dealing with my own sin, I often wondered as we get together with leaders and you're seeking God's wisdom and direction, and it seems like doors are slammed in your face and defeat is everywhere. And sometimes you beat yourself up. But could it be, could it be, that there's sin in the camp, someplace and that's the real reason you can't move on in the things that God has for the whole body of Christ? Joshua knew nothing about this. Joshua was moving on to the next place to possess the land that God had given.

Verse 3, "They returned to Joshua and said to him, 'Do not let all the people go up, only about two or three thousand men need to go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few.'" Now Joshua does an interesting thing. He listened to the spies. No place, unless I just missed it, does it say that God gives him directions. He's listening to the spies here. It's almost as if there's a subconscious, but there's a touch of arrogance here. After all, they just defeated, they'd just seen Jericho, the walls come tumbling down; the largest city in their whole journey together. "This little town of Ai, there's nothing to it. It's a piece of cake to us." I don't know if that was their attitude or not, but that just sort of jumps out at me.

Verse 4, "So about three thousand men from the people went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them down in the descent, so that the hearts of the people melted and became as water." Verse 6 says, "Then Joshua [when he found this out] tore his clothes and fell to the earth with his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads." That's the idea of remorse and of repentance.

Joshua could not understand why they were so easily defeated. He just didn't know, did he, that there was sin that was unconfessed in the camp? So he cries out to God. In his ignorance, He cries out to God. You see, not only had they been defeated, but when they turned and ran, they lost their confidence that God was with them. Do you see it's affecting not only the activity of the people but the attitudes of the people? One man's sin has caused every bit of this.

Joshua 7:7 says, "Alas, O Lord God," Joshua was crying out now. "Alas, O, Lord God. why did you ever bring this people over the Jordan, only to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan! Oh Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?" Isn't it typical of all our human flesh to blame God for the defeats in our life? We never seem to consider that sin just might be the culprit, not God.

Well, God answers Joshua in verse 10 He says, "What are you doing getting down on your knees, get up off that ground." He says in verse 11, you can tell the anger of the Lord is here, "Israel has sinned," God says, we read this earlier, but I want to read it in this context, "and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them amongst their own things. Therefore, the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turned their backs before their enemies, for they have become cursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst."

Verse 13 says, "Rise up! Consecrate the people, and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the Lord, the God of Israel has said, "There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst.'"

Verse 14, "In the morning you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes by lot," now this is something that is hard to understand, but the casting of lots was a part of their culture. There's a verse in Proverbs that says God is always in charge of that. You remember when Jonah, the book of Jonah, they wanted to know what was causing the storm on that ship. It was God's prophet, and they cast lots and it fell upon Jonah. Something that is so far different than our culture, it's hard to grasp, but he says, "which the Lord takes by lot shall come near by families, and the family which the Lord takes shall come near by households, and the household which the Lord takes shall come near man by man." As the tribes go by, then out of whatever tribe it's going to be that the lots fall on, then the family that's in there, then all the households in that family until you get to the singular household. And then it's person by person.

Verse 15, “It shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel.” Now, again, I want you to see before we go too much further, I want you to understand how that one man’s sin, done in secret, done in the shadows, not confessed, has now affected a whole nation. And God says, “I am not about to bless you until you deal with this sin and forsake it.” What was done in the shadows God saw.

I remember when I was in college somebody said something to me in a chapel service one day. Preacher came and he said, “You are what you are,” and, boy, this convicted me then and it convicts me still, “when you’re by yourself.” That’s what you really are. Boy, I thought about that a million times. You are what you are when you’re by yourself. Nobody else is around; nobody can read your mind; nobody can watch what you do; nobody can watch what you do. You think nobody sees. God sees. And if that sin is going to be unconfessed and hidden as it was in Israel and deceptive—the person was even deceptive about it, the Scriptures mention this twice—then it’s going to affect the whole of the body in some way. What was done in the shadows, God saw.

They were moving in the direction they thought was right, the leaders were, and they got shot down. And come to find out, lo-and-behold, there’s sin in the camp. I tell you, I don’t know where you are in your walk with the Lord, but this principle was taught to me earlier on when I began my journey with the Lord Jesus. And every time something like this comes around, I always come here first. Lord, is there something in my life. Lord, search me, as the psalmist says; let me see if there’s a hidden sin, if there’s something here that might be the cause of this whole thing. You don’t go pointing a finger here and there. No, you look in. And remember that any sin, personally, unconfessed, will always have an effect upon others.

Sin is a bearer of the consequences of God

Sin is a betrayal of our covenant with God; sin is a burden to the community of God. They were defeated and embarrassed. And now their attitude had even changed. They didn’t think God was with them anymore. They hadn’t really done anything themselves, but Achan had, and he was a part of them. And then thirdly, sin is a bearer of the consequences of God. Sin always bears a consequence. God determines that consequence, by the way. It always bears a consequence, but God determines it. We used to have a sign in front of the church I pastored that said, “You are free to make whatever choice you want to make. But you are never free to choose its consequence.” There will always be a consequence to sin.

In Achan’s case, the personal consequence was very severe. In Joshua 7:16, “So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. He brought the family of Judah near, and he took the family of the Zerahites; and he brought the family of the Zerahites near man by man, and Zabdi was taken. He brought his household near man by man; and Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was taken.”

Now it’s interesting to me that Achan never raised his hand and said, “I’m the reason.” Achan’s going to let this thing play itself all the way out. You see, I’ve seen this over the years. There’s a difference in being wounded and being broken. A lot of people are wounded when they are caught, or something happens to them in their life, and they tend to look as if they’ve repented. But they really haven’t repented. Brokenness comes when God’s convicted a heart. He’s going to wait to see if he’s going to get caught. I’ve always wondered what would have happened if he would have stepped forward first. Would he have had to pay such a severe penalty before God? We’ll never know. I’ll always wonder that.

Verse 19, “Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son,’”—and again, this affinity that they had with one another as family—“I implore you give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him.” What does he mean by that? Does he mean sing a chorus? Does he mean say something good about God? No! Here’s what giving glory and giving praise to God is all about—“and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.”

I want to share something with you that hopefully will help you in your Christian walk. Confession of sin gives glory to God. See, many people are afraid to confess. I’ve been transparent for so many years of my life and people use it against me constantly. I’m constantly getting all kinds of things about, “Yeah, you’re so bad!” But you know what, I figured something out. If God already knows it, why do I give a rip if anybody else does? We should then deal with sin and go on and be transparent with each other, and nobody trying to present a standard that nobody else can live up to.

Verse 20, “So Achan answered Joshua and said, ‘Truly I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, and this is what I did.’” Once he’s caught, now he’s going to tell it. “When I saw among the spoils a beautiful mantel from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath it.’ So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was concealed in his tent with the silver underneath it. They took them from inside the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the sons of Israel, and they poured them out before the Lord.”

Verse 24, “Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantel, the bar of gold, his sons, his

daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. Joshua said, 'Why have you troubled us?'" Remember back in chapter 6 he said if you commit this sin of taking anything, spoils of war that are valuable, you'll bring trouble against Israel. And he says, "'Why have you troubled us? The Lord will trouble you this day.' And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. They raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger." He turned away from that. "Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor to this day."

Everything associated with Achan had to be destroyed. Now, the principle that this teaches us in the new covenant, in a brand new age, in the age of grace, what it teaches us is completeness. That sin has to be dealt with completely. The Bible says he that confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy. What it teaches also is how serious sin is. Sin doesn't just affect me or you, whoever commits it. It affects other when left unconfessed. And as a result of that, defeat and discouragement can come into people's lives, and they can't understand what's going on. And it can be the sin of somebody else that's bringing in a corporate way a sense of defeat. It affects the whole body of Christ. Wow!

How does this truth affect you and I today in the new covenant? We live under the new covenant, the covenant that was made possible by Christ going to the cross to die for us. He paid a debt He didn't owe, we owe a debt we couldn't pay. This covenant is called the covenant of grace. It's a part of what was promised to Abraham in Genesis 15.

Does God kill people who sin today, Wayne? No, not necessarily. However, if you could resurrect Ananias and Sapphira they may argue with you. The first church had just started and they lied to the Holy Spirit. Peter came in and said, "Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit," and they dropped dead in their tracks. First John talks about the sin that leads unto death. Here's the point, that's an exception yes, but here's the point, all sin does produce death. Instead of getting hung up on the theological arguments of all that, make it simple. All sin produces death—death to the privileges and to the blessings that we could have experienced in Christ. When we're not walking in that, we're definitely affecting others around us.

Sin still is the same. God is the same and sin is the same. It should never be played with or taken lightly. If each of us—and I want to say this out of my heart, and I don't have any agenda, I don't have anything in my mind, other than what I'm going to say—if each of us would daily deal with the personal sin in our life, and all of us will sin every day of our lives; 1 John says if you say you live without sin, you make God a liar. We know that we sin. All of us sin. But if we would deal with it God's way: first, under the blood, and then with our brother—matter of fact, with our brother then under the blood, because he says go to your brother first—if we would deal with it God's way, instead of covering over it, I believe we would be overwhelmed and history would be made at the way God would choose to move in our midst. That's been my prayer for years for that revival that would come when people see the holiness of God and the seriousness of sin.

Sin is a betrayal of our covenant with God. Sin is a burden to the whole community of God. Sin is a bearer of the consequences of God. Is there any sin in this camp today? It doesn't start by looking at others, folks. It starts by looking within and saying, "Oh, God, as the psalmist said, search me, try me, see if there be any wicked way."

Gypsy Smith, the great revivalist, was once asked how to start a revival. And he answered the best answer I've ever seen. "Go home lock yourself in your room. Kneel down in the middle of your floor. Draw a chalk mark all around yourself, and ask God to start the revival you desperately want, let Him start it inside of that chalk circle. When He has answered your prayer, Gypsy Smith said, the revival will be on because it starts in here, first." You see, evangelism is not revival. Many people misunderstood this for years. Evangelism is awesome, but it's not revival. It's the result of revival. It's the consequence of a surrendered heart. Billy Graham was asked after a very successful evangelistic campaign, "Is this revival?" And Billy Graham said, "No, when revival comes, I expect to see two things which I have not seen yet. First of all, a new sense of the holiness of God on the part of Christians; secondly, a new sense of the sinfulness of sin on the part of Christians."

I had the privilege when I was in seminary to go to Asbury Seminary for one short semester. I got to go there and hear the most awesome teacher, Dr. Robert Coleman, who wrote The Master Plan of Evangelism. Just an awesome man. He also wrote the book One Divine Moment of the great revival that happened at Asbury Seminary years ago. It lasted for I've forgotten now how long. It was several months or whatever, long time. And he told a story like this:

"There was a chapel service and a student had been asked to come up and give a prayer that day. The student came up, and as he stood in front of the pulpit, he couldn't say anything. He just stood there and bowed his head and began to tremble and began to weep. And then he began to confess that sin was in his life and asked the people to forgive him and ask God to forgive him. Dr. Coleman said there was such an air, just an aura of the Spirit of God, to the point another stood up and began to confess sin, and another and another. And the chapel service was supposed to last 45 minutes has now lasted three and four days. Commentators all over the country heard about it and flew in.

Paul Harvey was one of them that flew in just to see what was going on. Nobody announced it. Nobody had time to announce it.

People were on their face before God and people as a result of that, in the little town of Wilmore, Kentucky, began to get saved and understand that God was doing a mighty work at Asbury Seminary. Why? Because one young man had been in the presence of God, saw His holiness to the point that he began to see the disdain for his own sin and was willing to confess it and make it right. And the great revival that is recorded in the book *One Divine Moment* occurred at Asbury.

A newspaper man went down from London to report firsthand the marvelous happenings of the great Welsh revival. If you've never heard of it, you need to read about that; at the turn of the 20th century. On their arrival all these newspaper men in Wales, one of them asked a policeman where the Welsh revival was. Drawing himself to his full height he laid his hand over his heart and proudly exclaimed, "Gentlemen, the Welsh revival is inside this uniform." You see, he had caught the Holy Fire.

I want to promise you, the Church will never know what God has for it until its people began to deal with sin, personal sin, because it's affecting the whole. It's mine, it's yours, it's all of ours. And as we're willing to come to His throne and confess our sin and be cleansed and become vessels that He can trust, then He begins to move His power through us. And I ask one more time, is there any sin in the camp?

Joshua 8a

Walking in the will of God

Turn to Joshua 8. We're going to talk tonight about walking in the will of God. I hope you're learning—we've seen this in Galatians, Philippians, and we're seeing it in Joshua—that when we obey the Lord Jesus Christ, He makes it so simple: Just surrender to Him. And we are willing to deal with sin in our life and not leave it unconfessed on a daily basis. We are then possessing the life that God has within us. It's no longer us, but Christ living His life in us. When He is living His life through us as cleansed vessels, then that begins to affect the world around us. It affects the home, it affects the neighborhood, it affects the church, it affects the world.

Well, our willingness to surrender to the will and word of Christ directly affects others. I don't think anybody would argue with that, because we are conduits God wants to work through. But however, we saw last time that the reverse is also true. Last week we looked at how sin, and particularly unconfessed sin in the life of a believer, affects the whole body of Christ, just as it affected the whole nation of Israel. See, unconfessed sin, it's a new perspective if you look at it this way, is a betrayal of our covenant with God. It doesn't just affect us, it affects people around us.

Joshua and the men of battle were headed up to Ai. But they didn't realize that they were moving up there to take this next city, as they possessed the land, they didn't realize that there had been a man in the camp that had sinned. You see, Joshua had been told by the spies to take just a few of the men up to the city, because they said it was a piece of cake. And they only took a few soldiers up there. But Joshua didn't know, nor did anyone know, that there had been sin in the shadows, and Achan had taken the spoils of war that God had forbidden in chapter 6.

Achan's unconfessed sin had broken the covenant that Israel had with God. And as a result, his sin caused all of Israel, two and a half million people to be defeated miserably when they came against the city of Ai. Since Israel was in covenant with God, they were in covenant with each other. One person's sin affected others. In other words, anyone who sinned affected other people that were in that covenant: in covenant with God and in covenant with each other.

We saw last week, as review a bit, in Romans that Paul says this very clearly, "We are members one of another." Unconfessed sin is a breach of a covenant that is among believers just as it was in Israel. But it's also, not only a betrayal of covenant, it's a burden to the community of God. The warriors of Israel that went up, only 3,000 of them, were so humiliated that when they turned their backs on the people, they literally lost their ability to trust God. They felt like God has deserted them. You see, Joshua, when he found out about all this, rent his clothes and cried out to God and God told him what was wrong.

You know sometimes we carelessly say, "I've done it and I know you have done it too," and to justify our sin, we simply say; "Well, what they don't know won't hurt them." Well, Joshua didn't know and it certainly did hurt him. Israel didn't know, and it affected the whole nation.

God ordered Joshua to march the tribes by as they cast the lots. And as we shared last time, we don't understand that fully that they would cast the lots. But God was always faithful to make sure it came out right. Almost like throwing dice, but it wasn't exactly that, but in our minds. The tribe of Judah was indicated and then the families in the tribe were marked as the lots were cast and finally it came down to a family and a household, and finally Achan was identified as the culprit. And I said last time, and I will say this time, I've always wondered if he would have gone and confessed his sin, if it would have been so difficult on him. But because he didn't, he waited it out, just to see if he could get away with it. And God finally pinpointed him right down to the man.

Well, his family, all of his possessions, the spoil he had taken, were all done away with. The family was stoned to death, and then all of them, plus the spoils of war were burned. And it's a picture to us, in the new covenant, of completely forsaking sin in our lives. If we would deal—and I said this last time—if we would deal with the hidden sins in our lives like David when he prayed, "Oh God, You have searched me, search me again." If we would deal with those sins before God and have them cleansed by His blood, and rise to walk in obedience to Him, it would blow us away what God would do in our lives and through our lives to touch other people. Once sin is dealt with it is then that we can experience God again.

Israel, having dealt with the sin in the camp, is now ready to participate in the will of God. Joshua had acted on the advice of the spies in chapter 7. He had listened to the wrong orders. But now God speaks and He's very clear when He speaks, and He gives Him the specifics of what he is supposed to do. That's a good caution to all of us. Be careful who you are listening to. Make sure you're hearing from God and His word when you make the moves and decisions in your life.

I found this illustration: Some years ago a passenger train was rushing into New York as another train was emerging. There was a head-on collision. Fifty lives were lost. An engineer was pinned under his engine, frightfully injured, tears running down his cheeks. In his dying agony he held a piece of yellow paper crushed in his hand. And he said, "Take this. This will show you that someone gave me the wrong orders," and then he died.

I tell you, it's devastating when we listen to men and we don't listen to God. I don't know how many times people have come to me and said, "Wayne, how can I know the will of God?" The simplest answer, there are other answers, certainly, but the simplest answer I can give them is we need to be totally open to do whatever it is that God wants and to make certain there's no unconfessed sin in our life so that what we are hearing is the right orders. God doesn't hide His will in a closet. And once we deal with sin, now we're free to hear from Him and walk in the clarity of His will in our lives.

God's will is always accompanied by His presence

Three things I want us to learn about WALKING IN THE WILL OF GOD.

First of all is this, God's will is always accompanied by His presence. Now, you've got to imagine when these soldiers, 3,000 of them, went up to Ai and all of a sudden they were charged by the people inside the city, inside the gates and they turned their backs and ran. You have to kind of imagine how alone they must have felt. Has God deserted them? They're out there on their own, and they're running for their lives.

There are two Greek words for the word "will" that we need to understand. The first word is a very weak word. It's the word *boule*. *Boule* is the word which simply means a wish. It's a much weaker word. God wishes that none should perish. It a difference in what the other word is. The stronger word, and the word we are dealing with tonight, is the word *thelema*. *Thelema* is the word that mean, God not only intends for something to happen, but He Himself gets involved with it to make certain that it takes place. When God's will, *thelema*, is our priority, you can expect something. Once you've dealt with unconfessed sin in your life, and once you've come before Him, then His will is given to you. You can expect His divine presence and intervention in your life.

God tells Joshua in 8:1, "Do not fear or be dismayed." Now, that ought to sound familiar to you because we saw it back in chapter 1. The word fear is the word that means to tremble in fear. It has the meaning to dread with terror, expecting the worst in your mind. The word dismayed means to fall apart. Just simply to fall to pieces. And Joshua had heard these very words, "Do not fear or be dismayed," spoken by Moses in Deuteronomy 1:21, "See the Lord has placed the land before you. Go up take possession as the Lord the God of your fathers has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed." When Moses was turning the reins of leadership over to Joshua, he said to him, in Deuteronomy 31:8, "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." Then the same words when Joshua was given the reins and Moses had died. God spoke to Joshua in chapter 1:9, "Have I not commanded you, be strong and courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed for the Lord, your God [and this is so beautiful] is with you wherever you go." Now at this critical time in Joshua's life, God is simply saying, "I'm willing to lead, if you're willing to listen. Do not fear or be dismayed."

Now, I don't know how to get this across, but it hit me so hard when I was studying. When I'm open to God and I say, "Yes, Lord! Yes Lord!" And I've dealt with sin in my life and my life is cleansed, and I'm in a pure spot and a pure position with God, at that moment God's assured presence dismisses all fear in my life. It's never been any different. When He's caused us to make moves that are very difficult for my family, to be stretched outside of our comfort, once we had known it was God's will, and that God had said yes, you go. The fear is dismissed because He is with us. When you're listening to the sound of a wrong voice, when you're hearing advice of men and not hearing from God, you end up like these men, running in fear and running dismayed. But when we hear from God, in His will, the fear is dismissed.

In Joshua 7 the whole attack on Ai was on the advice of the spies. That was not good, and that was not really becoming of Joshua. Joshua usually didn't do that. God had not spoken. It is only when we have deal with unconfessed sin in our lives that we truly want God's direction. That's the only time I've ever really wanted it, is when I've dealt with my sin and I've seen the fear and the dismay.

Oh God I have to hear from you. It's only then, when we do hear, that the fear is removed.

Once we hear from God and once we obey Him, He joins us in whatever it is that He has told us; the power of God's will in the life of a believer who is surrendered to do whatever God says. Israel could now enjoy the victory that God had given to them. In verse 1 again, "Now the Lord said to Joshua, do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise and go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land."

What is God saying to you and your walk with God right now? What's His will that's beginning to become clear? Perhaps you've asked this person and that person. You've been confused so many times in your life. But you've finally come and dealt with the sin in your life and you've said, "God I just need to hear from you." It's beginning to become clear. I promise you, when you grow weary of listening to men, it will be then that you'll be desperate to hear the word and the will of God. And when you hear it, with it comes the assurance of His presence. And with that all fear is dismissed. No matter what He tells us to do, all fear is dismissed, when we know He has told us to do it. For wherever He sends us, He goes with us. We're never alone. He's with us. Do not fear or be dismayed.

God's will is not always predictable

So God's will is always accompanied by His presence. But the second thing we learn about this as we enter into this story is that God's will is not always predictable. That's why it makes no sense to sit in a group and share everybody's ignorance and ask God to bless it about what God's doing. We don't know what He's going to do each time. Even though God is the same yesterday, today and forever, His ways are not our ways. He doesn't always do and work the same way as He has before. You see, He didn't give us a map, He gave us the guide. The key to the Christian life is to stay as close to the guide as we possibly can because things change in our life, and God never works the same way the second time. He'll continue to lead us and get us to hear from Him and to trust Him.

I bass fished for years of my life and I'm learning to trout fish. By the way, I have great respect for those of you who trout fish, because you've got a lot to teach me. But bass fishing is also a lot of fun. We would go down to Florida and we'd go down to these huge lakes, and I mean this is 10, 12, 14 pound bass. We would go down and try and catch them ourselves. But one year we saved up enough money to get a guide. Hotdog! Now we are going to do it right. We got in the boat, we had our big tackle boxes, had all of our stuff and we got out onto the lake and the guide said, "You want to do it my way or do you want to do it your way?" Well, we said, hey, we know how to fish. We had our bass master patches on. We know how to do this. And so we pulled out our artificial worms and put our little weights on it and we started throwing. One of us was throwing a rattle trap. One was throwing another bait. We were enjoying ourselves catching fish three and four pounds.

That's a minnow in Florida; three or four pounds, you mean you'd tell somebody you caught one that little?! And finally the guide said, "Do you want to do it my way and catch some big fish?" By this time we're desperate. You see, when you've tried your way for a while and you've gone on the advice of others, you get to that point. Yeah! We'd like to know what your way is.

He handed each of us a cane pole. A cane pole! And we go back in the shallows of a cove on this lake in Florida and we throw it out with a little bobber and we started catching shiners. Shiner is a huge bait fish out 12-13 inches long. And I'm thinking is this what we paid a guide for? At least we were catching four pound bass. We got about 10 or 12 of these shiners and he put them in his deep well and we got back into the water and we came up to this area and he said, "Now, listen, I'm going to hook them up for you. And it's going to have a bobber on here, a big old cork like thing," and he says, "It's so huge it's going to take a big fish to pull it under, but when it goes under don't you do what you've always done. Don't you jerk. You start counting at least to 25, because these are 12-13 inch shiners, and the bass is turning that thing in his mouth and you've got to understand you don't fish the same way you've always done it before."

Well, I took that thing and threw it out. When that bobber hit the water, and the weight and everything hit the water the bait and everything just kept on going. It never stopped. The bass took it as it hit the water. And, I mean, as he went the line was just streaming off my reel. And I'm a bass fisherman, you jerk! "Don't you jerk, Wayne, don't you jerk!" You count to 25. I was going 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11. I was skipping every number I could think of. I finally got to 25. Now, he says, "Crank it down, let it get tight." So I cranked it down a little bit. "Now, give it everything you've got." And when I did that my rod went this way. It was the smallest fish we caught that trip. After we went the way of the guide the smallest was seven and a half pound. We had 63 pounds of fish in about seven or eight fish. And I'm talking about huge fish.

I learned one thing: I can do it my way, or I can get in touch with the guide and do it his way. That's exactly what we're seeing happening here. In Joshua they went up on man's advice: "Oh! Don't take but 3,000. You don't need any more. It's a little bitty place. Don't worry about it." They were miserably defeated. Now God said, I'm ready to tell you, if you're ready to listen. Verse 2 we see something that He choose to do at Ai that he did not do in Jericho, and I want to make sure we see this. He says in verse 2, "You shall do to Ai, and it's king just as you did to Jericho and it's king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle and its plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city, behind it."

Now wait a minute. In Jericho they couldn't take the spoils of war. It was under a ban. God put it under that. But in Ai He says take the spoils and take the cattle. You know, I thought about this as I was studying. If Achan of chapter 7, had just trusted God and just rested in Him over in Ai, he could have had anything he wanted, but because he took it in Jericho that hard-headed self-will, he lost his life and everything.

Well, God's ways are not our ways. Why did He tell them not to take it in Jericho and why did He tell them to take it in Ai? I don't know. That's why it's so important that you can't just go on what you think. You've got to be in touch with the guide. The guide has got to have the lead. The battle plan for Ai was so much different from that of Jericho. Jericho they walked around the city one time each day for six days and seven times on the seventh day. Not this time. Ai was nothing like the city of Jericho. It was a small city but a fortified one. In chapter 7 the spies told Joshua to only send 3,000 troops to Ai as we said. What that means is, the city of Ai probably didn't have more than about 1,000 soldiers. Why would you say that, Wayne? Because if you're a military man, you're not going to take the same amount of soldiers that they have. You're going to at least try and double it or go beyond that. So we're guessing, but somewhere around 1,000 soldiers probably is all they had in that little outpost.

The actual city of Ai is not the city most people today think it is. It is probably the city where Abraham went, but this is not the same Ai. As we said, Ai was a fortified city. Verse 5 of chapter 7 refers to the gate of the city. Why is that important? Well, in 8:4 it mentions the word city, but the Hebrew word for city means a fortified city. A city with walls; a city that has been protected. And, of course, if you're going to have walls, and it's fortified, you're going to have a gate. There's another Hebrew word for a town or village, but it had no gate, it had no walls, and was open to whatever. But this was a fortified city. It was like a military outpost that stood in the way of Israel as they are moving in to take the land that God had given to them.

It sat on a hill. In verse 1, "go up to Ai." In chapter 7 when the Israelites ran from the people of Ai, they ran downhill from the city. Now the plan that God has for Ai is an awesome plan. Joshua at night chose 30,000 men to set up an ambush for the city. Verse 3, "So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night. He commanded them saying, 'See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city but all of you be ready.'" So he tells them, 30,000 men, to go behind the city and hide.

Now, imagine this, now think with me for a second. It would take quite an area for a city that sits on a hill not to be able to see 30,000 people. There's an arroyo of sorts, they called them wadis, that was big enough and hidden enough from where this city is supposed to have been that you could hide 30,000 men at one time and nobody of the city would be able to see.

Well, the second part of the equation now that we've got 30,000 hidden over here in an arroyo behind, or a wadi behind the city—the second part of the equation was in verse 5. Joshua would take the rest of the men with him, and approach the city where everybody in Ai could see them. And they are going to draw the people out of the city. Verse 5, "Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out to meet us, as at the first, we will flee before them. They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, 'They're fleeing before us just as at the first.' So we will flee before them."

Now some people say Joshua was just a smart man. I think God had already given him the discernment to know that now that they've already had this one defeat, that these people in Ai, as small as they are, are going to be a little cocky and arrogant, and they're going to take the same tactic when they see Joshua and that group of men with him. They are going to chase after them. They would be so arrogant they would leave the city unguarded.

When those who were hiding behind the city in that wadi, when they saw the soldiers of the city flee it and chase after Israel, then they were to charge the city and set it on fire. Verse 7, "And you shall rise from your ambush and take possession of the city, for the Lord, your God, will deliver it into your hands. Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do it according to the word of the Lord. See, I have commanded you." Verse 9 says, "So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people."

So, so far we have two groups. 30,000 hidden over here behind the city and onto the western side of the city, or actually across from the gate of the city; we have Joshua and his men that are camped out in plain view of all the people of Ai. There will be one more group; verses 10-13 tells us about them. "Now Joshua rose early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people of Ai. Then all the people of war who were with him went up and drew near and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now there was a valley between him and Ai." Kind of like a saddle. And he's over here on one hill and they're over here on the other hill. You can see him very, very clearly. "And he took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city." Now this is something new. "So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city, and Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley."

Now Joshua took 5,000 of these troops and he moved them around so the people of Ai couldn't see them, into another wadi on the

other side. It's beautiful if you see it on a map, on a topographical map, you see what I'm saying. So when the men of Ai came out to chase after Israel, these 5,000 were a rear guard. They came in behind them while 30,000 came into the city and set the city on fire. Had them surrounded. Oh, the men of Ai could see where Joshua were; they couldn't see 30,000 and 5,000.

Verses 14-17 tells the story: "It came about when the king of Ai saw it, that the men of the city hurried and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people at the appointed place before the desert plain. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. And all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city." Verse 17, "So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel."

Somehow Bethel, which was about three miles there to the west, got brought into this picture. Nobody seems to know exactly how. One of the thoughts that I had when I was studying it is that, since the text says they left "the" city singular, that the people of Bethel had come over to help Ai make a stand against Israel and they all emptied the city chasing after Joshua and his men.

Whatever, the whole strategy is so different from Jericho. I mean, God says, "I'm ready to lead if you're ready to listen." "Okay, God you want us to march around one time each day for six days?" No, let us be quiet and listen. He's got a total different plan with the city of Ai. God's ways are just not man's ways. When we walk in God's will, we stay close to the guide because only the guide has the plan. And if we're not going to hear from Him, and we're not going to walk in His will, then we're going to learn the defeat that Israel had learned by doing it man's way. His ways are not our ways.

I love that little bracelet, "what would Jesus do?" But I want to caution you about that little bracelet; because you see what Jesus would have done on this earth would have been to ask His Father, and whatever His Father said, He would have done. Be real careful when you always think you know what Jesus would do. The key is, get in touch with Him, and just let Jesus be Jesus, because His ways are not our ways.

God's will is divinely powerful

God's will is always accompanied by His presence. "Do not fear or be dismayed, I am with you." And when you say yes to Him, you have that assurance that He's involved in His will that He intends to see carried through. But not only that, God's will is never predictable. I wished it was. I wished we could figure Him out, but we cannot. Every battle's different. Every day is going to be somewhat different. There are principles that are the same but God's ways and our ways are not the same. But finally, God's will is divinely powerful. Man, when they did what God told them to do, they had complete victory. Israel has been given a second chance. I don't know if it encourages you or not, but it encourages me. Just because they failed, did not mean God kicked them out or would not continue to let them experience Him in the days ahead.

The victory that God gives here is a divine victory. Verse 18, "Then the Lord said to Joshua, 'Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand towards Ai, for I will give it into your hands.' So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city." A lot of discussion about what this javelin is. There's another word for a long spear they would use in war; it's not that word. It's not the word for the shield that was usually with it. The best thing that they can come up with as to why they call it a javelin, translated that way, is because it was a shorter spear. It's also been suggested, and perhaps has some merit to it, that there was some sort of flag attached to it because he was on a hill over here, the 30,000 had to be able to see him when he would raise it up, and the 5,000. I mean, everybody had to be able to see him in the midst of it.

Verse 19, "The men in ambush rose quickly from their place, and when he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it and they quickly set the city on fire. When the men of Ai turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city extended to the sky, and they had no place to flee this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers. When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and slew the men of Ai. The others came out from the city to encounter them, so that they were trapped in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they slew them until no one was left of those that survived or escaped. But they took alive the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua."

"Now when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field of the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. All who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000—all the people of Ai." A total victory! Verse 26, "For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of the city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the Lord which He had commanded Joshua. So Joshua burned Ai and it made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. He hanged the King of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset Joshua gave command and they took his body down from the tree and throw it at the entrance of the city gate, and raised over it a great heap of stones that stands to this day."

A complete, total victory, into the land that God has said was already theirs. But how did they get that victory? They had seen defeat with only 3,000 when they went up against them. Why? Because of sin in the camp. But once they dealt with the sin in the camp and once they came before God, God gave clear instructions and with it He showed them that His will involved His presence. That He was going to go with them. And that His will was going to be different than before, it's unpredictable. But that in doing His will it was very, very powerful. As a result, they experienced His power.

You know, these chapters are interesting as you take them one at a time and you just see what God wants to tell us as a church. One of the reasons I study through a book is so that we can learn the message God wants for us through the book of Joshua. What's He teaching us? I think one of the things that is so clear to me it's amazing what God wants to do with us if we'll just obey Him. And when He does it for us and when He does it through us, it's always for the benefit of other people.

The most incredible illustration: In a conversation with Professor S.F.B. Morse—remember him, Morse Code—the inventor of the telegraph. The Reverend George W. Hervey asked this question: “Professor Morse, when you were making your experiments yonder in the room at the University, did you ever come to a stand, in other words a stopping place, not knowing what to do next?” And he said, “Oh yes, more than once.” “And at such times,” the reverend said, “what did you do next?” “I may answer you in confidence sir,” said the professor, “but the matter of which the public know nothing. I prayed, and I prayed, for more light.” “And the light generally came?” the preacher said. “Yes, and may I tell you that when flattering honors come to me from America and Europe on account of the invention which bears my name, I never felt I deserved them. I have made a valuable application of electricity, not because I was superior to other men, but solely because God who meant it for mankind must reveal it to someone and was pleased to reveal it to me.” In view of these facts, this article said, it is not surprising that the inventor's first message on his newly invented telegraph, was “What hath God wrought?”

By the way, you'll never hear that in the schools of our land today. God moved upon a man and blessed everybody because he was willing to trust Him. It's the same way in everything. When God moves upon Wayne, it's not for Wayne's sole benefit. It's for the benefit of others. Why? Because we're in a covenant with God, and when we obey God it affects others. When we disobey, it affects others. So if we'll take the whole equation and turn it around, if we'll just say yes to God and walk in the clearly revealed will of God, then He'll take us as vessels and do through us what we could never do in ourselves. It will be unpredictable. It will be powerful in a spiritual way. But not only that, it will always involve His magnificent presence in the midst of it all.

Here's my point to you tonight: Are you allowing God to reveal His will in your life? Are you willing to do whatever He tells you to do? Have you dealt with unconfessed sin that's in your life? Have you dealt with it? Do you ask Him every day like the psalmist, “Search me, oh God; thou hast already searched me, search me again.” Why? Because I want to be a vessel that's pure. I want to be a vessel that can hear with clarity what God is saying to me, and I want to be about that which He has intended for my life. Where are you in your Christian walk with God tonight? Are you willing to let God be God in your life for the benefit of others that are out there?

Joshua 8b

Lordship: The Foundation of Spiritual community

Turn with me to Joshua 8. I want to talk to you today about Lordship – the foundation of spiritual community. You can have affinity; that's not community. I get a bunch of hunters around me and I have affinity. We can talk, we can talk the sport, but we're not talking about that. We're talking about spiritual community that only comes as a result of Lordship in a person's life. Let's see if we can get into this. Joshua 8, we're going to be looking at verses 30-35.

In our studies of Joshua we are learning to possess, experience, what we already have in Christ. God didn't give us a land, He gave Israel a land. Their covenant was external, ours is internal. And as they learned to possess the land God had given them, we're learning from them, according to 1 Corinthians 10:6, “All these things happened to Israel for an example to us.” So we're learning from them how we possess the life that God has given us in Christ. In Christ we have every spiritual blessing, Ephesians 1:3 tells us. There's not one blessing we lack in Him. One of the most wonderful things that we find in this life that Christ offers us, His life, one of the most wonderful things we find is community—spiritual community, family. That's what He gives to us. Only found in Him. The word covenant and the word community go hand in hand.

Israel has learned through their experience of Jericho that when they are willing to yield to everything that God says, then as a unit, they experience community together. When obedient to God, they were able to walk in the victory that He gave to them, now listen, together. Now that's the beauty of this whole thing. It's not just something individual. It's something corporate as a unit. They were in covenant with God. They were in covenant with each other. Therefore, they had community. And as they were willing to trust God, they experienced His power and His victory together.

What a journey they have been on since chapter 1, since we started this study in Joshua. In chapter 7 a man by the name of Achan evidently didn't understand community; didn't have a clue. He didn't know that what one does affect everybody else. When they conquered Jericho, they had been told not to take any of the spoils of war. Chapter 6:18-19, God specifically said, "I put a ban over this." Any of the wealth, the gold, silver, etc., were to be turned into the treasury of the Lord. But Achan just couldn't resist. There it was, lying around, and so he stole some valuables and he hid them in his tent. He didn't confess his sin so it went seemingly unnoticed. However, God knew.

Meanwhile Joshua, acting on the advice of the spies, took 3,000 men up to the little military outpost of Ai, thinking that there it was going to be a piece of cake. They were miserably defeated. You see, Achan had betrayed his covenant, not only with God but with his fellow men. In other words, he was in a community. You don't do things that way. It affects the whole community. And, therefore, they were miserably defeated.

His sin was not only a betrayal of covenant. His sin was a burden to the whole community of Israel. When they fled from the enemy, they had to turn their back to them. They had never done that. Already the spies had told them earlier on before they even crossed the Jordan, Rahab told them, listen, "The people's hearts have melted. The land is yours. The people are scared to death of your God. They've heard about all He's done in your life." So therefore, they knew that they had God's victory; but when sin was in the camp, they didn't have it. And so they turned and they ran. And now the fact that they were cowards in battle would spread to other Canaanite nations and they would be defeated over and over again. They lost their confidence in God's presence among them.

And as a result Achan paid dearly. Not only did the nation suffer defeat, and many died as a result of him, but Achan paid dearly. His family, his livestock and everything that he stole had to be destroyed in the valley of Achor. And God teaches us through this that sin affects the community and it must be dealt with and dealt with completely for the whole community to be able to go on together, corporately, in the victory God gives to us.

Well, thank God He forgives. His mercy is fresh every day. When they dealt with sin, they dealt with it complete. Now in chapter 8 they choose to obey God. They've gone from disobedience now to obedience. And thank God He allowed them to do that. In 8:1-29 Israel now goes in and defeats the city of Ai. From chapter 8 we have learned several things about walking in His will. To begin chapter 8 they'd already sensed the appearance of God's manifested presence, and in chapter 8 He starts off and He tells Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed." Joshua had heard that four different times at least in his lifetime. And usually, not here, but usually accompanied with it was, "for I am with you." Now His presence was back among them. And His presence is what dismisses all fear in our life.

We learned that God's will is not always predictable. Not only is He present to carry through what He demands, but His will is not always predictable. When they got to Ai it was not the same things as being at Jericho. Not only could they take the spoils of war in Ai, if Achan had just been resting in the Lord, he could have had what he wanted when he went to Ai, but because of his own flesh he caused his own death. It was very consequential in his life.

But not only that, the battle plan was so different at Ai, radically different than at Jericho. And what we learned is, God didn't give us a map, but God gave us the Guide. And that's the beautiful thing about the Christian life. The guide is the Holy Spirit who comes and lives in us. He's the one who knows the plan. And so therefore, we have to stay as close to Him as we possibly can by surrendering and saying yes to Him. Then we begin to experience the direction that God wants us to have in our life.

Instead of walking around the city one time each day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day, oh no, it wasn't that way. They put 30,000 men behind the city of Ai which sat on a hill, but there's a place there where they could be hidden. And then he took 5,000 men and put them over to the west of Ai, and then Joshua took a group of men and they came out in the open. That's the only people that the city of Ai could see was just Joshua and his men. They didn't see the other 35,000. And then Joshua came in, knowing that they were going to chase him like they did before, and so they turned as if they were in flight and fear, and they turned and ran. And the people of Ai said, "Ah, we got them again." And they left the city unguarded. When they left the city unguarded, chasing Joshua and his men down the hill, the 30,000 came in took the city, burned the city. When the warriors of Ai looked back and saw the city smoking, they realized what had happened, and they turned to go back. But when they turned to go back they ran into 5,000 and then Joshua's men turned on them, and they had them trapped. It was an ambush. And they had a total victory. They had a total victory because they obeyed God.

But the key that I want to bring across to you is they had a total victory together. Community was established again. And this spiritual community, walking in the victory that God had given to them, they once again were able to experience. What I want you to see in the last part of chapter 8 verse 30-35 is that lordship, bowing to His will, surrendering to His will, is the very foundation that spiritual community is built upon.

The Old Testament platform for community

It doesn't start with community. It starts with Deity, Lordship and bowing before Him. Let me show you that. The two things that I'm

going to show you today: First of all, the Old Testament platform for community. I'm going to say it over and over again to where you can't miss it. There is no unity amongst God's people, there is no community amongst God's people, until God's word is honored by all. This is what lordship is all about.

Joshua 8:30-35. Let me just read to you the scenario we're going to look at and then we'll come back and talk about it. Verse 30, you just follow along, "Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel in Mount Ebal." Verse 32, "He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written in the presence of the sons of Israel. All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priest who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as the native." Everybody was included. "Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them stood in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them."

Now, what we're seeing here is a public ceremony honoring God and His word. It was a group of people, Israel the whole nation, that had come before Him to renew their covenant with Him. Now Mount Ebal that is mentioned here is quite a distance from where the people are in chapter 8 at the city of Ai. Militarily, one could argue that this was not a good move, because to get to where this place was they had to go through Canaanite territory. But Joshua is responding in obedience to what Moses had commanded back in the book of Deuteronomy before they had ever crossed over the Jordan River.

And this really wasn't his only reason. Joshua also knew that they needed to do this to renew their covenant. They have just sinned. They've repented. Now they've walked in obedience, but they need to come back and they need to be reminded. They had sinned and had seen miserable failure. They had obeyed and they had seen victory. And they needed to renew their covenant with God. Yes, they had dealt with their sin, but they still needed to renew their covenant with God. This is similar to when they crossed the Jordan River and they circumcised all the males and renewed their covenant then before their first battle. This is very similar. The people had to be constantly, constantly reminded of walking in obedience to God and what covenant was all about.

Now Moses had commanded them to build an altar at Mount Ebal, way back in the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 27:4-6. Let me read that for you. Verse 4 says, "So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal these stones as I'm commanding you today. And you shall coat them with lime." Now we don't have a whole lot of understanding of why the lime except it makes something identifiable. It whitens it and people can see it. "Moreover you shall build there an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones. You shall not wield an iron tool on them. You shall build the altar of the Lord your God of uncut stones and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the Lord your God."

Now back in Deuteronomy 11:29 Moses mentions two mountains that identifies the spot where they are to come and renew their covenant, "It shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place a blessing on Mount Gerizim and a curse on Mount Ebal." Now these two mountains, Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, were the two dominant features in a land that was known in biblical times as Shechem. This site was very significant, Shechem, because it marked the site of Abraham's first altar in Canaan when God led him over there, and it marked God's promise to him of the inheritance of the land. This is where it took place. Also, it was the location of Jacob's well. It also, later on, went on to become the place where Joseph was buried. It was a very significant spot.

Now these two mountains, Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, proclaimed a very powerful message and this is all involved in this ceremony they are going to go through in a minute. Mount Gerizim proclaimed that God is obeyed and Israel could walk in His blessings. It was known as the Mount of Blessing. But the Mount Ebal was proclaimed as a Mount of Curses. When the law was disobeyed, when was disobeyed, then the curses would fall upon the people.

Joshua took Israel to this sacred spot so that they could renew their covenant. How fitting. They had just disobeyed, and then they had obeyed, and they had seen the results of both. And now they came to where these two mountains are to renew their covenant. Standing on one side was this mountain, standing on the other was this one, and in the middle was an altar Joshua would build. Israel was saying in the ceremony we're about to look at, "God, we understand our sinfulness and we're coming before You as a community, as a unit, to say, 'Oh God, we will obey Your word, and Oh God, we honor Your Lordship in our lives.'"

The altar was built there and they were going to sacrifice offerings on it in accordance to what Moses said, but really much more than that—in accordance to the way God had commanded all altars to be built. God gave instruction for building the altars in Exodus 20:25. He says, "If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it." And that is a principle that carries with everything that God ever did. When man puts his filthy paws on it, it profanes it. God says, "It has to be Me and it has to be pure. Don't put a tool on this rock. You put the rock, left uncut, and build the altar."

Once the altar was built, the ceremony would include two kinds of offerings: one was burnt offerings; and two were peace offerings

or fellowship offerings as some say. Burnt offerings were to atone for their sins. How fitting that that was to go first. The animals had to be sacrificed and had to be totally consumed by the fire. The smell was a sweet aroma unto the Lord. But the second offering was not a gloomy sin offering. This was much more of a joyful offering. The portions of the sacrifice were eaten by the ones presenting them and this offering was a picture of being one with God and because we're one with God we're one with each other. Community! It was what it was all about. This offering given after the burnt offering signified that the people were one in their surrender to God and to His Lordship.

It was on the stones of the altar that Joshua wrote a copy of the Law that God has given to Moses. Verse 32 says, "He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses which he had written in the presence of the sons of Israel. It was then that the whole nation divided up." This is so interesting to me. One half goes over to Mount Gerizim and the other half goes over to Mount Ebal. They were so close that you could shout and hear the other person shouting from the other side. Half on one side, half on the other.

Verse 33, "All Israel with their elders, and officers, and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as the native." Everybody was included; nobody was not there. "Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal. Just as Moses the servant of the Lord had given command at first to bless the people of Israel."

Now Moses in his instructions in Deuteronomy even told them how they were to divide up. It wasn't a matter of haphazardly, "well, you go over there and I'll go over here." No, they knew exactly which mountain to go to. Deuteronomy 27:12-13, "When you cross the Jordan, you shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin." But then it says, "The cursed, these shall stand on Mount Ebal: Ruben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali." They appeared to recite the curses and the blessings and then Joshua read it from the Law. It appeared that over here on this mountain they shouted back the blessings and then they shouted the curses which are listed in Deuteronomy exactly what happened if they disobeyed and what would happen if they obeyed.

And then in verse 34, "And then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the Law." What a powerful illustration of a whole nation that was one that day, understanding that lordship was absolutely paramount. That God's word and His will is what lordship is all about. And they understood if they disobeyed and if they obeyed, this would happen. Everybody was involved. The whole nation was involved as a community, together.

Verse 35, "There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the woman and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them." When they came to this ceremony and they collectively, corporately, surrendered to the lordship of God in their lives, and the power and the authority of the Word in their lives—in those moments there was community like they had only experienced when they had obeyed God before. They had experienced when community wasn't there when they had disobeyed and once again, now, there in community. They are experiencing community.

For community to be experienced, I'm not talking about affinity, I'm not talking about groups that have a lot of things in common, I'm not talking about that. When community is experienced, spiritual community, lordship is at the root of that. You never start with community, you start with deity and bowing before Him and His word. Community is an outgrowth of all of that. For true community to happen God has to be honored, His will and His word obeyed.

Now I'm going to bring it down from the sublime to the ridiculous. I want to make sure you understand. When I was growing up, community in my family rested on my sister and I obeying my mother and daddy. It's just amazing. You can draw another word close to community would be fellowship. We had fellowship when we obeyed. My mother, bless her heart, I was thinking about those precious people that home-school today. Our daughter home-schools. I think it's wonderful. But if my mother had home-schooled me, she would have been in heaven a lot earlier in life. I was a pill.

I remember one day sitting on the kitchen stool and was wrong and she knew I was wrong and I knew I was wrong, but I wasn't going to give in. Ever been there? Fellowship had been affected and community had been affected. There was no community here. I remember my mother, just so upset with me. Finally, I looked at her and I did the dumbest thing, I said "Well, I just wished I'd never been born." If there's a young person in here, may I just suggest to you don't ever do that. I'd be 7 feet tall if I'd behaved myself coming up. Man, I could tell that just absolutely irritated her to no end. Her nose began to get red and run and her eyes were running and she was mad. She wasn't upset, she was mad. And then I did another dumb thing. I said, "Well why don't you hit me." Oh! Stupid! I mean, I thought she'd be a decent momma and slap me. She didn't slap me, she hit me with her fist right between my eyes. I mean, she just hauled off, she was so mad and went bam! Right there, man I grabbed my face and I'm thinking, oh my goodness, my mother, she's broken my nose right here in the kitchen. My mother's thinking, oh, right hook I didn't know I had. When I finally got right, fellowship was restored. Community was restored.

Why is there not community, spiritual community being experienced in the church of Jesus Christ? I'll tell you why; because there are too many people playing games with the lordship of Christ. Oh, they want affinity. Let's get a group together. Let's make a basket.

Let's get a group together and let's go sing songs. But they don't understand community, and that's something that only comes from bowing to the lordship of Jesus Christ. When I'm one with Him and focusing on Him and I bow before Him then with others who have done the same thing, I can have unity and I can have community, it's all rooted in the deity of Christ. I must be surrendered to His word and His will absolutely in authority in our life.

The New Testament picture of community

That's the Old Testament platform for community. You say, Wayne, thank you so much. I'm glad that's Old Testament, but we're New Testament. Would you tell us what the New Testament says? Thank you for asking. I want you to turn to Acts 4 and I want to show you something. Here comes the New Testament picture of community. The Old Testament platform of community is lordship. That's the foundation of it. The New Testament picture is the same. God has not changed. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. If I'm going to experience community, it comes from Jesus not from others—who have likemindedness of things, it's going to come from Him. I experience community through Him. It's part of the life that He's given to me. God's plan for true community—here's the thing.

Acts 4:32. Now this scripture is rehearsing for us the birth of the new church. The new covenant has been inaugurated. The spirit has come to live in the lives of believers. The New Testament church is beginning right here. In Acts 4:32 here's the way the verse begins, "And the congregation on those who [what?]believed." Now, you've got to stop right there. Don't go any further. What did they believe? And to find out what they believed you've got to backtrack and go back in context to Acts 2:36.

This is the summation of Peter's sermon after Pentecost, one of the greatest sermons that he ever preached. Acts 2:36, now listen to how he sums up, the epitome of what he said, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ." Who's he talking about, "this Jesus whom you crucified." Now if you don't understand that, you have to realize He can't be the Messiah unless He is Lord. The two are synonymous. Messiah means the anointed one, the one that was promised. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one.

But not only that, to be that, He is Lord; given a name above every name. To which every knee at some point will bow. Now think about that for a second. Christ is the Lord, and they believed this. What does it mean for Him to be Lord? It means He's our authority. It means that His word is our command. His will is to be totally surrendered to. And these people believed upon Him.

Now go back to Acts 4:32. It tells us that there was a congregation who believed this. The congregation believed. Now what is the word believed? It's the word *pisteuo*. *Pisteuo* is a word that means far more than simply to comprehend. There's a lot of people who comprehend this, but it's never gotten out of their head down into their heart. The word comes from *peitho*. It means to so be persuaded by a truth in a spiritual sense, that you're willing to let it radically change your life and your behavior. If it doesn't change your behavior, it's not belief. You don't call it belief because you understand something, and comprehend it; not until it has changed your life can it even be called belief. They believed it to the point that it changed, radically, their lives. They had to honor God's word and His will and that's what Lordship is all about. That's what we saw on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. That's exactly what you see in the New Testament church.

Now this produced a unity among them. Look again at verse 32, "then the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and one soul." Wow! How in the world can you get a group of believers together, 5,000 were saved at one time, 2,000 at another time—how can you get them together to have a unity of heart and soul? I'm telling you, folks, belief is the key. Lordship is the key. Belief in the doctrines of scripture, particularly the deity of Christ and a willingness to surrender to Him and to His will and to His word produces a unity amongst others who are doing the same thing. Doctrinally and spiritually the new church that was birthed in the book of Acts at this point were one.

Now you start to read the epistles you'll discover where there was much disobedience in several churches and you'll see the community totally interrupted because of that. You'll see the unity totally disrupted because of that. But watch the verse. We're not through yet. They have deity, they've bowed, they have unity. Watch this, "the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul," now watch, "and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them." This is the sweetest verse. They had a sensitivity; they had a compassion for each other to the point that if somebody had need in their midst, in their community that they reached out to see if they could meet that need. They had truly experienced community.

But now listen, once they experienced the deity and bowed, and believed that He is Lord, both Lord and Christ, and they let it affect their behavior—then they were one in heart and soul and then they experienced a community. But watch what else happens. This is the very thing, now listen carefully, that affected evangelism in the early New Testament church. This is what caused it to have an impact. Keep reading, "and with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and abundant grace was upon them all." Wayne, what do you mean? They were just going out and doing their thing. No, no, no. Look at the next verse. There had to be credibility to the message before trying to take out there. Until God works in here with a community this is absolutely, this is indescribable, then He can't work out there with a message. This validates that. It's got to be in here first.

And Acts 2:34 says, "For there was not a needy person among them. For all who were owners of lands and houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales." And verse 35 says, "and lay them at the apostles' feet that they would be distributed as any had need." Now this is not some form of communism—everybody went home and sold everything they had—no, it was as God directed them. Because back in chapter 2 it says a very similar thing, but here we are in chapter 4 and they still have their houses, so something's not right.

But what he's saying is there was a sensitivity that God built within them for each other. It's a most beautiful picture in the world of what community really is. This is one of the reasons we preach the word of God, the lordship of Christ, and living grace message, because until that is effective, then you cannot have unity. And until you have unity, you cannot have community. You can have affinity, but you cannot have spiritual community. And that's a huge difference.

In fact Luke, who writes the book of Acts, gives two examples. If you have ever studied this passage, you know where I'm headed. He gives an example of a precious man, humble, who sells his property and brings it and lays the proceeds at the apostles' feet. And that's beautiful. But then in chapter 5—and some people disjoin the two chapters and you can't do that; it's a flow because it starts off and connects the two—and then there were two people, a husband and a wife, that just for show, sold their property, but they kept most of it for themselves. And they made a big show of coming and laying at the apostles feet and they had lied to the Holy Spirit of God. They had broken community. And as a result of that, they fell dead at Peter's feet. I imagine if you were trying to join that church in those days, you'd want to back off for a while. Does God do that all the time, no. But does He make His point clear? Very!

Community is important. But you don't start with community. You hear this a lot in our culture and in our day: We want community, where can we find community? It doesn't start by coming to church and finding a group of people that you can have affinity with. It starts with bowing before the lordship of Christ and then Jesus in you draws you to other people who have done the same thing. And that unity begins to develop between those who have finally bowed and then spiritual community grows out of that.

Will it be with everybody in the church? No, probably not until Jesus comes back. But you can find it in the remnant. It's always there. If a person's willing to bow before God, then he can be unified with others who have done the same thing. And then God will give them a spiritual community they've never fully grasped. The foundation of community amongst God's people begins with the doctrine of the lordship of Christ. His word, and His will has got to be honored or there will be no unity and there'll be no community. In fact, when this takes place, it's only then that our evangelism will have an effect.

George W. Truett, pastor before Dr. Criswell at First Baptist Dallas, the story is written of him. Dr. Truett of Texas was invited to a church that was raising \$6,500 to dedicate a church building. What he means by that is they're trying to pay it off. And back in the day, when this was written, \$6,500 was a lot of money. My daddy, the year he died, made \$5,000 and that was enough to get us by. Different day, different dollar.

After 3,500 had been promised, no money raised, the offering ceased. Then a plainly-dressed woman arose and spoke to her husband who was taking the names of those making the pledges. "Charlie," she said, "I wonder if you'd be willing to give our little cottage for this debt. We were offered \$3,500 for it yesterday. Would you be willing to give our little house for Christ so that His house might be debt free?" The fine fellow responded with the same high spirit. "Jenny, dear, I was thinking the same thing." Then looked up at Truett, his face covered with tears, he said, "We'll give the \$3,500." It said in this account that what followed was—men and women began to sob out loud when they realized the deep sensitivity this couple had. They begin to sob aloud and in just a few minutes the \$3,500 cash was raised and provided.

But then, without invitation—there was no invitation, this was a meeting to dedicate a building to make sure it was debt free—without an invitation there began to be people coming down the aisle and saying to the pastor, George W. Truett, "Oh sir, how can we come to know the Lord Jesus as our Savior?" The sensitivity of the body gave credibility to the message and the invitation was given through their gracious care for one another. That's what community is all about.

Christ has to be real inside His church before His message can be effective outside the church. So what's the foundation of spiritual community? Everybody wants it! Again, not affinity, community! You can find affinity anywhere, but community is lordship. Will you have it with everybody? Probably not, but will you have it with the remnant? Absolutely! God will draw you and polarize you to people of the same mind who love God and love His word. And you're going to begin to see something begin to happen—unity of heart and soul and community in the body that has come back to renew their covenant with Him.

That's Old Testament, Joshua 8:30-35, and that's New Testament, Act 4:32 and following. You know what I want in my life before I die? I want real community. I want real community. In fact, when I was in conference work, I had no idea that you can have it, but it's a little bit vague. You know what I'm thankful for this morning? I am thankful for those of you that love God and God's already drawn me to, and I'm thankful for the unity and the community He is building among us. If you find no community, keep checking it back. Is there unity? "What do you mean unity, Wayne?" That means the word of God unified and the lordship of Christ is believed. And if you

can't find that, then you can understand why there's no community. Whether it be in this group or that group, or this group, or this group. It works the same way.

So this morning as I close, are you part of the solution? I'm seeking to be. I really am. Or are you part of the problem? If you're looking for community, but you're going the wrong way to look for it, are you willing to bow, give up your agenda, and to say, "Jesus, be Jesus in me. I love You, I love Your word." And then God puts you in the company of others who have done the same thing. And lo and behold, there's a community beginning to be developed. That's what it's all about.

Joshua 9

Failure and How to deal with it

Turn with me to Joshua 9. We are going to talk about something tonight that's a very familiar subject to everybody. Anybody who says it isn't would lie about anything: Failure. Anybody relate to that at all? Failure and how to deal with it; we're going to see this in chapter 9 in a big way.

Have you ever asked yourself the question—I have, and I just wondered if you have—have you ever asked yourself the question, "Will I ever get to the place where I don't have to deal with failure?" Anybody besides me ever ask that question? Well, you know we will get to that place. You know when it's going to be, when we die—or when Jesus comes first. But we're going to have to have a glorified body before we ever get to the place that we don't have to deal with failure. In fact, failure can be and is a tool that God uses many times in our lives to teach us. We live in a world that says you can't fail. We live with a God who says you're going to fail and let me take your failure and help you, grow you, encourage you in your walk.

Failure is very real.

Israel is the perfect picture of the battle that we have with our flesh and the consequent failure that results in our life when we yield to that flesh. Every time I say yes to Wayne, failure is immediate. That's with all of us.

We learned from our study in Galatians that the flesh is an enemy of the Spirit of God. We know that, but isn't it amazing we can hear it in here and say yes, amen, and walk outside and before we get to the car, it's already got us. Galatians 5:17 says, "For the flesh 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;" in other words, so that you might fail when you obey the flesh. If we were to add something to it, which you don't do, but just to make sure we understand it, when we choose to fulfill the desires of the flesh, failure is the result.

It appears from our text that we are going to look at in chapter 9 today that the sin of Achan back in chapter 7. Remember, the old boy that couldn't resist the temptation and stole some of the valuables when they attacked Jericho. Well, they were subsequently defeated at Ai which also happened in chapter 7. They didn't know that Achan had done what he did. All of this has somehow allowed the inhabitants of Canaan to see that there's a chink in Israel's armor.

This hasn't been good. The very fear that Joshua had is now coming to fruition. Before, we saw in our study, even when they sent the spies over, they came back saying the land is yours. The people are terrified of Israel and their God. And we knew that. We've heard that several times in our study along the way. But now, even though Ai has been defeated in chapter 8, it seems like the nations feel like that Israel's human after all and that they can be defeated because they heard about that first defeat that they had at Ai.

So now a coalition of nations that inhabit Canaan comes against Israel. They begin to line up to come against Israel. Joshua 9:1, "Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the low land upon all the coasts of the great sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it." Now what did they hear? What is it that caused what we're about to read take place? What did they hear? Well, obviously, they heard of Ai being defeated and in a big way. But you have to consider that they also heard, because if word travels that fast, they also heard of Israel being defeated by Ai. On that first onslaught to the city, Israel was miserably defeated and they turned their backs and ran like as if they were without their God being with them.

Well in verse 2, "Once they heard it, they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel." They must have figured that there's more strength in numbers than there is in one group; because Jericho fell, Ai fell, but if we all come together there's a chink in their armor and we can defeat them. So they formed this coalition against Israel.

Well, that is, all but one group. And that's the Gibeonites that we're going to study in chapter 9. They had other ideas. What Jericho couldn't do with their walls and what Ai could not do with their weapons, the Gibeonites are going to do by sinful deception. They are

going to deceive them. They are not going to come against them in battle. They are going to deceive the Israelites. You see, the Gibeonites were the next area to be conquered by Israel. They didn't want to die. They had heard what had already happened and what they were about to do would bring about a huge failure on Israel's leadership—that's Joshua and the leaders of Israel. They are going to make a huge mistake. They are going to fail in a big way.

By the way, isn't it amazing that after our greatest victories in the Christian life, we seem to experience some of our greatest failures? I mean, they've had some pretty good victories in chapter 8. They have conquered Ai. They have celebrated. They renewed their covenant and boom! Failure in chapter 9.

Our flesh should never be taken for granted. You know, when I say this, I'm talking to me as well as you. We're all in the same boat. We're here to encourage each other. The victories of yesterday never ensure the victories of tomorrow. Have you discovered that? How many of you already figured that out? That's right! Yesterday can be walking in the glory of God and today can be one miserable failure because we cannot take the flesh for granted. Deception is always lurking around every corner ready to trip us up. In our study today we want to try and understand what to do when we have failed. Now listen, remember this, every time we listen to our flesh, which is what they did, and do not consult with God and His word, every single time we will end up in failure.

I love the emails that some of you send me. I really do; the humorous ones that are so funny. Keep sending them please. From time to time you'll hear them again. I won't give you credit for it, I promise. Unless you want it. I'll even put a footnote on it if you tell me to. But some of the emails are just so funny. To illustrate this point in a humorous way, there was a man driving down the road. And there's this lady, this woman, that was tailgating him. Have you ever had somebody do that in traffic? And they will not get off his bumper. They'd be a foot and a half or two feet behind him. Every time he'd hit a yellow light, she'd go through with him. You know how that works. If he'll try it, they'll try it. And he went through several lights that way, and it was just irritating him to no end.

And so he came up on a light that was green and was turning yellow. He said, "I'm not running that light, I'm going to pull up and stop and let's see what she does this time." Well, she had to stop and almost ran into his bumper. And when she had to stop and wait on that light and realize what he had done, she began to curse him and just yell all kinds of obscenities out the window. She beat on her roof and just began to flap the wind. She was livid. She was so upset. While she was doing this, suddenly there was a knock on her window. Tap, Tap Tap. She looked and an officer was standing there with his gun pointed at her and he told her to get out of the car and get up against the car with her legs spread and her arm out.

Well, he put handcuffs on her and read her her rights, put her in the police car, booked her and took her to the jail. Booked her on car theft. And she's sitting in the cell wondering what in the world is going on. About two and a half hours of her sitting in that cell, finally had an embarrassed trooper walk back down and let her out and apologize. He said, "Madam, I'm so sorry. You have to understand, I was following you as you were tailgating that man for the last seven red lights. And when he stopped and I saw you going into that tantrum and I heard all the things coming out of your mouth, I couldn't help but notice the three bumper stickers that were on your car: One says 'I'm PROLIFE;' the one in the middle said 'What would Jesus do?' And the one to the right of it said 'I (heart) Jesus.' He said, "So naturally, I just figured you'd stolen the car."

I enjoy telling those kind, because it's in traffic that I find out what failure's all about. I guarantee you, you put me in traffic, I'll tell you what failure is all about.

Well, we're going to see the leaders of Israel—now listen, this is not just the nation, this is Joshua, the man and the leadership, the elders of Israel—we're going to see them make a huge mistake and we're going to see the reality of failure and how to we can learn to deal from it as we study them. They got in heavy traffic. They failed. But what do you do when you fail? Alright, we want to look at three things that come out of this text that might be an encouragement to all of our lives tonight. The fact that they encounter failure in chapter 9, teaches us so much.

Failure is assured

First of all I want you to see, failure is assured. The reason I say failure is assured is because we are still dealing with the flesh in our life. Every day we deal with the flesh. See I'm not just pointing at you, I'm pointing at all of us. All of us are going to have to deal with failure. It is assured in our life. When we listen to the logic of our flesh, it's always the prerequisite to failure. Logic and our flesh—when we listen to what it's telling us, when we listen to its reason, without checking with the word of God, it's always a prerequisite to failure. Not only have I done it but, you've done it, and we're going to do it again. This is a part of our spiritual vocabulary. Just accept it. Once you become a believer, failure will be in your future.

All the nations mentioned in verses 1-2 have declared war on Israel, but the Gibeonites have another plan. Look at verse 3, "When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, they also acted craftily and set out as envoys and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wine skins worn-out and torn and mended, and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and had become crumbled." Now, what are they up to? What's going on here? Sounds like a group of high school students going to school. What are they up to here? Why do they

have all the worn-out clothes and worn-out sacks and all this kind of things with them?

Verse 6, "They went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, 'We have come from a far country, now therefore, make a covenant with us.'" Now it immediately comes clear the deception that they wanted to get into their minds. They wanted to get Joshua and his leadership in Israel into thinking they were foreigners from another place, not Canaan, and they've come a long way by their worn-out items such as the wineskins and sandals. They want to make them think that they've been on a great journey. They want to covenant with Israel as a friendly people. Why? So that they might be spared in battle. They've heard about Jericho. They've heard about Ai. And they don't agree with this other coalition. They're going to go and see if they can't get them to make a covenant with them, try to deceive them as to who they are.

In our lives there's nothing that could please the devil any more than for you and me to make a covenant with that which he hates. You think about that for a second. What have you covenanted with that your flesh has desired that has already become a huge problem in your life? What have you covenanted with? What is trying to peacefully coexist with you as you seek to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ? You see, our flesh is so easily deceived. And if we're not careful, right when we think we're walking in victory is immediately when sin will deceive us. And when we choose to have our flesh pleased, then it will seek to peacefully coexist in our lives. And there is no peaceful coexistence with sin and the Spirit of God.

Back in Deuteronomy, to help you understand what I just said, Moses told the Israelites something. Now understand what God told them and listen to His wording in Deuteronomy 7:1, "When the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you. And when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them." Destroy them. Now listen, this is God's command to them, before they ever got into the land. "You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them."

It's a picture of our life and walk with Christ. Sin cannot have an entry into our life. We have got to understand that. God was very clear how the enemy was to be destroyed. I mean, that's what He said: you destroy them, don't you make a covenant with them, don't you become friends with them. No sir, He says later on because their pagan ideas will get involved and it will make your walk with Me impure.

Joshua and his leaders made a serious error. They judged on appearances. They saw the worn-out sandals and the worn-out wine skins and they didn't consult God on the matter. They trusted their human logic.

Let's follow the story. Verse 7, "The men of Israel said to the Hivites." Now, why does he say Gibeonites and Hivites? Let me explain that to you so you won't get lost. The Hivites were descendants of Ham, who was a son of Noah. And the Hivites lived in an area that ranged from Shechem all the way to Gibeon. So even though they were Gibeonites, they were also Hivites. They were in that particular range and they were descendants of one of the sons of Noah. Verse 7 continues, "Israel's leaders said to these people, 'Perhaps you are living within our land.'" When they come and they're talking to them, "How then shall we then make a covenant with you?" If you're in this land, we can't make a covenant with you. Verse 8, "But they said to Joshua," oh man here we go, "We are your servants." You see, that's the way it starts off. We're here to please you. We're here to serve you. What would you like for us to do? Oh, how our flesh loves to hear those words. "We want to serve you. We are pleasure for you. We have come to be at your bidding."

Verse 8, "They said, 'We are your servants.' Then Joshua said to them, 'Who are you and where do you come from?' And they said to him, 'Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the Lord your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan—Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan which was at Ashteroth. So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us—take provision in your hand for the journey and go meet them and say to them, we are your servants. Now then make a covenant with us.'"

Now this is exactly the way it happens. Nobody's checking anybody out here. Our flesh wants to be pleased. They are looking at the obvious physical appearance of these people and the fact that they've proclaimed they've been on a long journey. You see, sin stands at the doorstep of all of our lives and offers all of its pleasure. And we have to be so discerning. Particularly when we've just walked in victory we become more vulnerable than any other time before, because we almost feel like sin can't bother us anymore. That's exactly when it all sets up in our life.

We studied Galatians for a year, many of you were with us. Isn't it interesting that the religious mindset that the Galatians bought into came in this very way? It came in as a servant. "We're just here to help you," these false teachers told them. "Religion is simply a great way for you to relate to God better. We're here to serve you. We're here to please you." But the lie behind it was that it circumvented everything that Christ was wanting to do through their life; because Christianity is not a religion it's a relationship. And it's the same. They didn't intend to do it, but they dropped their guard and the deception was set. The trap was set. The hook was in. Failure is always assured when we listen to our flesh to see to it that it is pleased; then there's always failure as a result.

The deception is really clever. Verse 12, "Our bread was warm when we took it out for provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you, but now, behold, it's dry and become crumbled." We've just traveled so far. They weren't but three days journey from where Israel was. They are trying to make them think they are coming from another country.

Verse 13, "These wineskins which we filled were new and behold they are torn. And these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey." You see, in order to enhance their point, they kept berating the fact that look at how old these things are, and it was fresh before, and we are just worn out. We've come a long way. We couldn't possibly be an enemy to you. They wanted to coexist with Israel. And Israel's leaders bought it hook, line, and sinker. You would think Joshua? Not Joshua! Yes, Joshua. He bought it hook, line and sinker.

Verse 14, "So the men of Israel [that means the leadership of Israel] took some of their provisions and did not ask for the counsel of the Lord." Can I read that again, "and did not ask for the counsel of the Lord." And let me read it again, "and did not ask for the counsel of the Lord." Israel made two huge mistakes: They judged them on their appearance. Why? Because they're saying, "We'll serve you. We'll please whatever you want." They judged them on their appearance. They took some of their provisions. What does that mean? They tasted to see whether the food was as old as they said it was. And instead of demanding more proof, then what they did with the foreigners, they accepted shallow evidence.

Can you imagine? When God says, "Don't you dare make a covenant with anybody in that land; this land is your land. You have to go in and get rid of it all because they are pagan and they'll pollute your worship with Me if you leave them in the land." And yet, here they are without any more proof than just tasting some stale bread and looking at the physical appearance of what they had took place before them.

But the second and the most major mistake they made; instead of consulting with God to find His discernment, they made their decision based on what they had found. Feeble proof. And now it's going to cost them.

How many times have we done the same thing. God's word is the grid that everything's got to be run by. I don't know how many times I've heard somebody say something and I've said that is good, and I've written it down. And I've come to God's word and God's word said, it sounded good, but it's wrong; because the word is the grid. It's the grid. Everything has to filter through the word. It's God's breath. It's what He's given to us. And what happens so many times, our flesh wants to be served; if there's some pleasure we find in something and we tend to overlook. I don't really want to read the word there. And so instead of checking it out the way we should have checked it out, sin gets in. It finds an entry point. Our logical conclusions are not to be trusted until we consult with the word of God.

I don't know how many times in my life I have really missed the will of God. I mean, I'm telling you—you say, "Wayne, if we knew that we won't have called you." Well, if I had known what's going on in here, maybe I wouldn't have come. So we're all in the same boat. You've been there, I've been there!

There's four things that I use when I make a huge decision any major decision in my life.

The first thing I do is, what's the deepest desire of my heart? But I have to be very careful about that because the flesh can get involved and want to be served. And boy can it pull me in a lot of directions.

Secondly, what opportunity has God raised up for me to fulfill that desire? Well, Wayne, that's pretty good, but doesn't that lean over to what the flesh wants? No, no, that's just two steps.

Thirdly, when I'm alone with God in His word, is He confirming that desire and that opportunity? I want to tell you something, folks, when you get alone with God and you confess the sin in your life and you lay down your agenda and you say, "Oh God what do You want?" I tell you, it doesn't take anybody's discernment at all to figure out whether it's right or whether it's wrong. In your heart God will let you know.

And then fourthly, what supernatural thing has God done to just confirm the whole thing and put the lid on top of the bottle? I've done that for years. But you know what I've also done? I've also stretched those first two points. Oh, what I do I want to do. And then you stretch it and you stretch it and you leave out any one of those and you're in disaster.

It's like a ship. I just came back from Minnesota. I was up on Lake Superior. How many of you have ever been on Lake Superior? I was up on the North Shore. Is that beautiful or what? I don't know if it's in America or not, but it's beautiful. My goodness, we were 52 miles from Canada. But you know, they had these ports and they had these harbors, huge ships up there. They had iron ore. And they pull in there. But sometimes it gets fogged in. And they have a huge lighthouse called the Split House Rock lighthouse. And when I got up to it, I wondered, why do you have a lighthouse on such a big lake? And they said, duh! I mean, Wayne, there's a harbor here. And you have to make sure that that lighthouse, that's the key, that's what the pilots of the ships key off of to make sure that they can enter safely into the harbor. There are rocks on both sides. It can be 1,600 feet deep but it can be four feet deep right over here and drop straight off.

I look at these four things as four harbor lights. Until all four of them are lined up, I'm not moving. Why? Because I have learned something, my flesh wants to be pleased and I can stretch it on the area of its desire. I can even stretch the area of opportunity. But what does God say about it? That's how easy sin gets in, because the flesh wants something, but it's not willing to check it with the word of God.

Remember how the first battle of Ai, Joshua listened to the spies and he didn't listen to God, he was miserably defeated. You'd think surely he's figured it out by now. And then you come to chapter 8 and they do listen to God and they have a wonderful victory. And they also go over and renew their covenant at Shechem. Surely they're walking now and doing it right. Oh super! I can find somebody else to disciple, that old boy's doing it right now. And boom! Chapter 9 hits. Once again they fall right back into the trap of what the flesh wants. Failure becomes very assured in their lives.

If you're here tonight and you've failed, well, welcome to the normal Christian life. Maybe you're beginning to have an understanding of why you failed. Where did the failure come from? And it doesn't take a Harvard graduate to figure out that when I choose to please my flesh, when something is appealing to it and I do not consult with God, failure is immediate in my life.

Failure must be admitted

But here comes the question I want to ask tonight: But once I fail, okay, Wayne, so we fail, alright, now what? The way they handled this failure to me really warms my heart. You see the integrity of the leadership of Israel: Failure must be admitted.

Israel, once they'd made a covenant with the Gibeonites, God's people could not go back on their word. They gave their word. They entered a solemn oath, a covenant with these people. Yes, they'd failed, but so be it. Now they had to work to let it work for them, not against them. You see, they had used God's name and sworn an oath that they would be at peace with the Gibeonites. And you see, it's not their name that's at stake, now, it's God's name that's at stake. In their life, in their culture, oaths were very important, especially when it was a Christian type of thing or when God's name was used. And anyone who ever broke a covenant could expect the vengeance of God on their life. If you don't believe this, study through the Old Testament. Second Samuel 21, King Saul. He chose to break an oath that was made all these years before and God took it out on that old boy big time, because once the oath is made, it stands.

They made it wrongly, they failed, but they made an oath and there's integrity in this thing which we will see in this leadership. Verse 15, "Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them to let them live. And the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them. It came about at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within the land," just not far away. "Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah, Be-eroth, Kiriath-jearim. The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord the God of Israel and the whole congregation grumbled against the leader."

Like I said, it only took about three days to figure out they had been duped. They'd absolutely been deceived. When they heard that the Gibeonites lived in their land, as we just read verse 17, it appears they set out to whip them out, but that's not what happened. Verse 18 shows that Israel's leaders were men of integrity. They had sworn on an oath. They had made a covenant with these pagan people in God's name. Now their failure had to be admitted. The whole congregation is grumbling against the leaders, probably because they wanted the spoils of war. You see, they had already taken the spoils at Ai, they couldn't take it at Jericho. And here were all these cities that they could take in the area of where the Hivites lived and all that big broad, expansive land. Look at all the spoils and maybe they were greedy and wanted more spoils. We don't know why they grumbled against their leaders.

But I so respect Israel's leadership. They blew it, but they were willing to admit it and to accept the consequences. And that's part of learning to deal with failure when it comes. We have to admit it. I'll be honest with you, many times in my life I'd rather blame somebody else. Isn't it more fun! It's a whole lot more fun! "Adam, where are you?" "She made me do it." "Eve, where are you?" "The devil made me do it." I mean, just keep passing the buck instead of going on and admitting our failure.

Well, in Joshua 9:19, "But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, 'We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them.'" And what the leaders are saying is yes, we've failed. Yes, we've made an oath with these pagan people, but we are going to have to move on. We cannot go back on that oath. We have to protect them now. Therefore, we have to live with it. Yes, we made a mistake, but we will have to learn to live with it. Verse 20, "This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them."

Verse 21, "The leaders said to them, 'Let them live.'" They made their mistake work for them, not against them. And verse 21 says, "So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them." The Gibeonites had become slaves to all of Israel for the rest of their days. You know, one of the things you've got to understand—they were pagans; and God's biggest fear was that if they joined with them, that paganism would come into Israel. But not one time is it ever recorded in history that that paganism was a problem. Somehow, with their failure, they still had to head off

other problems, but they were honorable to honor the covenant that they had made with these people.

Failure must be assessed and the consequences accepted

So failure is assured and as long as we deal with our flesh, we're going to fail. But the key is, once we have failed, we have got to learn to admit. Just go on admit it. Yes, I have failed. Accept what goes with it. That's my third point. Thirdly, failure must be assessed as to why it happened and it must be accepted. The consequences of it must be accepted.

Verse 22, "Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them saying, why have you deceived us?" Now he's already asked this once. "Saying we are very far from you when you were living within our land." He's still perplexed. He wants to assess, how is it that they were so convincing that we could make a covenant with them? He wants to know why this failure was there. Why he failed to recognize them as the enemy? What happened in his life?

Verse 23, "Now, therefore, you are cursed and you shall never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of God." So they answered Joshua and said, "Because it was certainly told your servants that the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you, therefore we feared greatly for our lives because of you and have done this thing. Now behold we are in your hands, do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us. Thus, he did to them and delivered them into the hands of the sons of Israel and they did not kill them. But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord to this day [when this was written] in the place which he would choose."

Don't you know, again, the perplexity in Joshua's heart? Don't you know the frustration and the confusion when it dawned on him he'd made such a stupid mistake? They had just stood at Shechem and they said at Mount Gerizim the blessings of the covenant and Mount Ebal, the curses of the covenant. He understands when he disobeys God he's going to have to pay the consequence. And it's been such a glorious victory over Ai—Boom! Failure! And a kind of failure that he was going to have to live with for the rest of his life. Failure could not be undone. It would live with Israel forever.

Let me ask you a question? What failure in your life still lives with you today? You've made a failure in your life, you've made a foolish choice. You obeyed your flesh as all of us have done and maybe the consequences were sort of like this. They were heavy and they still walk with you everywhere you go. Have you learned to admit it? Have you learned to assess why you made the mistake and have you learned to accept the consequences that are now here? Have you learned to do that? If you have, then failure can be a tool in God's hand to help you grow and help you in your walk with Him. What have you learned from the failures in your life?

You know, I was with a group this past week and I was the youngest by three years out of 83 people. And I really felt good about that. I felt kind of young, I really did. But, you know, what I heard from them over and over again is how God is ministering to their lives and many of them didn't come to Christ until later on in life. And I think maybe that's one of the good things about getting older. You've had so many failures that you finally get to a point you say, "I'll just admit it. I'm a failure; but now let me start learning from why I failed. Let me start assessing where this came from. Let me start learning that mercy will help me bear up under the consequences of the choices that I've made in my past." And then it becomes a tool in God's hands.

Now listen, one other thing I want to share with you, then you have to move on. The apostle Paul, when he had finally dealt with some things in his life, he said, "forgetting those things which are behind," what does he do, "I press on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Don't let failure drag you down. If you've failed, you've failed, so be it. You can't go back and unscramble eggs. But you can admit it. And you can assess it. And you can accept the consequences. Don't put them on somebody else. And thank God for His mercy that helps us bear up under the consequences of foolish choices and then start learning from it so that you can continue to walk in the grace of God.

Failure is very real. I know in my life I deal with it every day. But don't let it defeat you. These are godly men, and as you follow them through Joshua, you're going to see some great victories that are going to come in their lives. Some great things are going to happen, so it didn't keep them down. It took them down, but it didn't keep them down. They got back up. And they learned to accept, to admit, and to assess. Failure is a tool.

I thank God that He allows us His grace, don't you! If I gave you a book story of all my failures in my life, we'd be here for the next year. You can just put on my tombstone—He was a failure. But I want you to finish the sentence—but thank God, God's grace helped him to get back up on his feet and he learned from his mistakes.

Folks, failure is part of your spiritual vocabulary. We don't have the luxury of laying around feeling sorry for ourselves. Deal with it! Accept it! Assess it! And then live under the consequences God has given. Two words I want to leave you with: Grace deals with your sin; we're never told to show grace to anybody. Mercy deals with the consequences of sin; and that's why we are told to show mercy over and over and over and over again.

My prayer is that if I ever fail, and do something really stupid, that you will love me enough to stand beside me, bring me to the place

that I'll admit it, assess what went wrong, accept the consequences and keep loving me so I can keep on walking as a believer in God's kingdom. Failure is not necessarily a bad thing if you let it work the right way in your life.

Joshua 10 God's Grace

You know, today is a very special day for our country. On June 6, 1944, was the invasion of Normandy. We call it D-Day. Quite an impact! And of course you know the history of that. Matter of fact, we're going to look at D-Day of sorts. We are in Joshua and there's a bunch of soldiers here and they're going to be in battle. So if you'll turn to Joshua 10. And I guarantee you, anybody who's been in a war, knows the power of our Almighty God. Whether they be a believer or nonbelievers, they're aware of that. And that's what I want to talk to you about today, is our Almighty God. That's what I want you to see in Joshua 10. And as we get into it, the most wonderful truth about the grace of God is that failure does not disqualify us from ever being usable again. That's the beauty of God's grace. As you know, grace has overwhelmed me. And that's what comes out of me no matter what book I'm talking about; that God uses failures. Matter of fact, failure can be a tool if it's properly addressed. We simply have to observe scripture to see this confirmed, and especially in our chapter 10 that we are going to look at today.

In Joshua 9 Israel and in particular, Joshua and the leaders, this is the leadership, this is God's man and this is his elders that are around him—they made a horrible mistake. They failed in a horrible way. In chapter 9 the Gibeonites, now the Gibeonites were on the frontier of Canaan. They'd already been to Jericho, they'd been to Ai and the next area were the Gibeonites. They would have been the next battle, but they were no dummies. They'd already heard about the defeat at Ai. They'd heard about Jericho. And they didn't want to die, so what they did, they sent an envoy, a group of people, over to Joshua where they were camped at Gilgal. They came and acted like they were foreigners. They didn't tell them they only lived a little short ways away. They tried to make them think they came from another country. In order to deceive them, they had taken old bread, old wineskins, old clothes and garments, and they made it look like they'd been on such a long journey that these things were new when they started and had worn out by the time they finally got to where Joshua and his men were camped. They told Joshua and his men that they were servants. They wanted to serve Israel. And the whole thing was that they wanted a covenant of peace with Israel. They wanted to enter into that covenant.

Well, instead of seeking the Lord—and this is where failure begins—instead of consulting with the Lord, which is what we should always do, in prayer and in the word. Instead of doing that, Joshua and his leaders, it says in chapter 9, did not consult the Lord and judged these people based on appearance only. That was a horrible mistake. You would have thought that by now Joshua is getting the picture. I mean, this is not the first time when he's failed.

Well, they made a horrible mistake. They entered into a sacred covenant with the people God had said don't even associate with and also to destroy in the land. They made a covenant with them. I tell you what, this makes our failures pale in comparison. It affected two and a half million people by their insanity by doing this. Here's the key. When you fail, now what? Is God going to kick you out? Is God going to quit? No!

They were willing to admit their failure. In fact, when they found out the Gibeonites were just over the hill, immediately all the men rushed over there as if to take them out. And Joshua said, "No sir, no sir, we have made a covenant. Yes, we've made a big mistake. We have failed. We have sinned. We didn't consult the Lord, but now we're in covenant and there's integrity to covenant and we have to honor this covenant we have made with these people."

And then they were willing, Joshua was willing, to assess the failure. He asked some very specific questions as we looked at it last time together. And he wanted to find how this happened. He's interested so that he won't let it happen again. And then he was willing to accept the consequences of their failure, which, by the way, would be with them forever. When you're in covenant with somebody, it's till death parts you. So as long as they would live, they would be in covenant with these Gibeonites.

But to me the most important thing in the lesson that God taught me as I studied this—and by the way, when I study, I'm not studying for you, I'm studying for me. I want God to speak to my heart. Then out of the overflow, I can preach to you. That's the way it gets out. And what God said to my heart was, it's not just that we failed and once we're willing to accept and to assess and to admit it, but they got up and they moved on with their life.

So often failure paralyzes us, it cripples us, and we think we'll never be usable again. And God says, "No! No! Repentance is simply turning back to Me, admitting what you've done, and choosing to trust Me now because you didn't consult with Me before. That's what caused your failure, now turn it around. Learn from it. Trust Me and walk with Me and I'll use you."

In today's message we're going to be studying chapter 10 to see exactly how God chooses to use Israel again. They have messed

up again, but they have made it right with Him and God's going to empower them in a powerful way. It's proof that failure does not in any way mean that God is finished with us. I'm so grateful for that.

You see, it's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. The only hope I have in this world and you have in this world is His absolute impeccable love for each of us. That's what changes us. That's the goodness of God. In chapter 10 it's all about God. You say, no, it's not, it's about Joshua and the ingenuity of the military men. No! No! No! It's all about God. It's about His divine intervention in the lives of those people who are willing to say yes to Him, to be obedient to Him. When we're willing to deal with our failures and repent and choose to obey God's will, then God will cause us to have victory over the very thing that caused us the failures in the first place—which was our flesh. God replaces us. It's no longer us, it's Him in us.

In the life that we're trying to possess—Israel's possessing a land, we're possessing a life—I want you to see the lessons that we can learn from Israel. In chapter 10 word has gotten out about Israel's victory over Ai and certainly over Jericho. But also word has gotten out that the Gibeonites have entered into a covenant of peace with Israel. That was seen to the enemy as surrender. They'd given up. They didn't even fight.

So in verse 1 of chapter 10 it says, "Now it came about when Adoni-zedek, King of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua had captured Ai and had utterly destroyed it, just as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king. And that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were within their land," verse 2, "that he feared greatly," this king Adoni-zedek. "He feared greatly because Gibeon was a great city. Like one of the royal cities and because it was greater than Ai and all its men were mighty."

Now, the name of this king grabs your attention immediately. You see the name Adoni and you know that's a good word. That's a word for Lord. And Zedek, the word means king of the Lord of righteousness. He was the king of Jerusalem. You say, now wait a minute, Wayne, my mind's a little foggy—here's Canaan and they're enemies and they are suppose to destroy them and here's a guy by the name of Adoni-zedek, what's the deal? Well, in this case, names don't mean very much. He's a bad king. Don't get excited. Some people say he was kin to Melchizedek. We don't know that. You can't prove anything here. However, we know this—he was not a friend to the posterity of Abraham, to the children of Abraham. To the seed of Abraham he was not in any way a friend like Melchizedek was. Abraham even brought his tithes to Melchizedek. But this guy is different.

Fear gripped this king when he heard of Israel's victory over Ai and Jericho and especially when he heard Gibeon had made peace with Israel. And by the way, this is the first time we find out that Gibeon was a great city. It was greater than Ai. It was in a royal class maybe because of, I don't know, the prestige of it. But it was on that threshold on that frontier of Canaan. It was a strategic city for the Canaanites.

So this king, out of fear, calls four other kings to form a coalition against Gibeon. They are mentioned there in verse 3, and then in verse 4 he says, "Come up to me, and help me and let us attack Gibeon. For it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel." Now his motive is not certain. It doesn't tell us. It could be because they were such a strategic city they wanted to go and take it back because they needed that city to protect the threshold of Canaan. It could be that they were angry that the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel and they wanted to attack them to destroy them, to punish them. We don't know.

But these five kings, interesting point here, were not good friends. But, you know, anytime you mention Israel, God's people, and anybody that wants to side with them, isn't it funny what that does to unite people that don't even like each other. All of a sudden there's a point of commonality and they were willing to form this coalition against Gibeon.

So in verse 5, "So the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish and the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up—they with all their armies and camped by Gibeon and fought against it." Well you know what's going to happen. Gibeon's already figured some of these things out. Gibeon's going to immediately run and ask Israel to come to their help. Why? That's covenant language. When you entered into covenant, you exchanged robes; that was identity. You exchanged belts. You see that with David and Jonathan over in the book of Samuel. And when they did this, the belt is where weapons were. And what you were saying in covenant was, I'll protect you and they would protect them. You know Jonathan protected David from his own father. This was covenant language. So if you're in covenant with somebody, you are bound by an oath to protect the one whom you have covenanted with.

'Well, verse 6, "Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal saying, 'Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us for all the kings of the Amorites that live in the hill country [this was the region they came from] have assembled against us.'" And Joshua, being a man of his word—he said what he meant and he meant what he said—he followed through. He had no recourse. I mean, he understands covenant. He understands he is bound even by a failure, he's still bound and he's willing to be a man about it and follow through.'

But the story teaches us so much about the almighty power of God in our lives when we choose to obey Him. He knew God would hold him to that obedience, and he didn't even flinch. Didn't blink an eye. This is what we want to see today: How God steps in, yes, He's always there, but in the sense of manifesting Himself. When Wayne or you or anybody chooses to say yes to him, they're not

alone. God manifests His power in an awesome way. He's an awesome God! A mighty God. We're never going to tap into that power until we come to the place of admitting our failures, but also accepting their consequences and saying yes to God and moving on in our life. God immediately manifests His power within us. It's magnificently manifested in those who obey Him.

As we walk through this, remember we don't fight flesh and blood, we're in a new covenant. This is way back in history. What we fight is the world, the flesh and the devil. Mainly the flesh; that's the culprit; that's our enemy. What I want you to see today is we're going to look at three different things, but they happen almost simultaneously when you say yes to God. This is the only difficulty in preaching. Sometimes it makes it look like that's step 1, that's step 2, and that's step 3. But I want you to see that in the Christian walk all of these things are happening at the same time. To the enemy that caused us to fail, God's going to conquer the flesh and therefore, release us to be vessels that He can use once again. The key is saying yes to Him. The key is saying, "God whatever You will in my life. I'm willing."

God's power confuses the enemy

Three things: first of all, His power confuses the enemy. Remember now, they had an enemy, five kings. We have enemies but it's all spiritual enemies; the world, the flesh and the devil. Okay, now hang onto that, because we're possessing the life, they're possessing the land. When God intervenes, no one can miss it. And in the case of chapter 10 of Joshua, it's going to be supernaturally obvious. God immediately assures Joshua with His promise and with His presence. I love this. Every time you say yes, immediately you sense the presence of God and His promise.

It says in verse 7, "Joshua went up from Gilgal [that's where they were camped], he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors. The Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear them." Don't you love that! "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not one of them shall stand before you."

Now, he's not giving Joshua a new promise at all. He's assuring him of a promise He's given him before. In Joshua 1:5 if you've been with us and studied Joshua with us, you already know this. In Joshua 1:5 it says, "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 forsake you. I will not fail you or forsake you." He's already told him that. And when Joshua finally gets up off of the floor when he's failed and he admits and he assesses and he accepts and he moves on with his life, God comes back and reaffirms what was there all along. "I am going to be with you. Don't fear them!"

There's absolutely no fear whatsoever when we're completely yielded to God and to His will. First John says, "Perfect love casts out fear." Fear can't get in. There is no fear when we are saying yes to God.

But I want you to notice something: Joshua had already broken camp and headed toward Gibeon before God gave him this promise. That's just something I think we need to understand. It is only as we obey that the fear is dismissed. We can sit around and talk about whether or not we are going to do something that God's told us to do, and we'll still be full of fear. But not until we act upon it is the fear dismissed. We don't get the luxury of peace in our hearts until we obey. It comes in the act of obedience. It's not something that makes you ready. You move, you step on what God says, then the fear is dismissed and the assurance of His presence overwhelms us.

I don't believe it'd be wrong to use this illustration. I have become good friends with Richie McKay who's the coach of University of New Mexico Lobo basketball team. I love basketball. I think basketball is going to be the game of the millennium. I want to dunk the ball one time with a glorified body. "Michael Jordan sit down, watch this"—just one time.

Richie loves the Lord. He's a very dear man. And he was asked to go to the National Collegiate Association of coaches meeting and he was asked to be one of the speakers. And they were addressing a problem. And the problem was some of the things going on with coaches in big time programs, and some of it being immorality and other things. And they were to address what's going on and how can we solve this. Richie did not know that he'd be the first one to speak. Richie had already had God put on his heart that he wanted to give his testimony and share about purpose and only Christ can give us that purpose in our life. And he shared with me of how nervous he was to get up. He didn't know when he would speak. He was number 1. They called him. Can you imagine sitting there? You've got all the great coaches sitting there, and here you are and they call on you first. He had about 10 minutes.

Richie said when he walked up, his stomach, you know the nervousness, the sweat in your hands, but he said when he walked up and began to speak and do what God had told Him to do, the fear left him. And he said it was incredible what he experienced as he shared, which was, by the way, unprecedented, because they don't do that at national coach's conferences. But it was interesting.

You see, this is what happens in our life. Every time I've ever gotten up to preach my stomach get nauseous; I have sweat in my hands; because I'm going to stand before God one day for what I say. I don't get the luxury of thinking this and thinking that and speaking whatever I'm thinking about. You better check it out. Those who teach the word of God are going to stand before Him. Those of you that are teachers understand that. We're all going to stand, teachers of the Word of God are going to stand in a

greater judgment one day. And it puts a fear in your heart until you stand up and you do what God tells you to do, and the fear is dismissed.

He was already on his way to Gibeon and then God said, "Don't fear." That's when the fear's dismissed. He didn't flinch. He knew exactly what God wanted him to do—honor that covenant. Yes, you're a failure, but get us off the floor and say yes to Me and don't worry about it, I'm with you. I am with you.

God proceeds to confuse the enemy when Joshua acted upon His will. God's already working on the enemy. God's way ahead of us. Joshua's obviously acting on God's command and caught them completely off guard. Verse 9 says, "So Joshua came upon them suddenly by marching all night from Gilgal." Now God had led Joshua to march all night long to catch them off guard. Now some people will say, "Oh no! No! No! Joshua was ingenious, and God respected his ingenuity and He just involved Himself with it." Then you're studying a different guy than I'm studying. This is a guy that doesn't know how to get in from the rain. He lets an envoy from the Gibeonites deceive him just that quickly. When they're over at Ai, he gets arrogant and he goes up against the city and doesn't even ask the Lord about it, trusting the advice of his men. Listen, and God so overwhelmed him in every situation. No sir, it was God who gave him the ingenuity. God gave him the understanding—march all night. Catch them off guard.

Verse 10, "And the Lord confounded them before Israel and He slew them [He slew them] with a great slaughter at Gibeon and pursued them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah." The word confounded is the word meaning to confuse. The nations weren't ready. They didn't know what to do. You know, when you confuse the enemy, it has no plan at that point. There's nothing it can do to defeat you. You think about it in our spiritual battles: the world, the flesh, and the devil; they have a lot of plans up their sleeves. You start saying yes to God, they have no clue. It's totally confused. It confuses that which we deal with.

The enemy was so terrified that they took off running and Israel took off after them with the presence of God assured to be with them. I love it when the enemy comes against us and instead of us fighting in our own power, we cry out to God and immediately the fear that they want us to have of them is suddenly transferred and now they are afraid of us and running from us. Colossians 2:6 says, "As we have received Christ Jesus, so walk you in Him." As we yield to Him and to His power which brought salvation the moment we bowed before Him, also continues that salvation in a different way. He's delivering us from the evil that's around us when we say yes to Him. He confused the enemy and puts fear in their hearts so the enemy will flee. The enemy will flee.

Verse 10 says, "He [speaking of God] slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon." This is all about God. All we want to do today is just talk about Him. It's all about God. When we say yes to Him, the manifested power of God that we experience in our life and how that we walk in the victory He's given to us. Victory's not something we go and get. Victory's something we already have in Jesus Christ. And when we say yes to Him, it's no longer us, it's Him. He's defeated the power of the flesh. He's defeated the trappings of the world. He's defeated the devil and all of his schemes and therefore, now we can walk in the victory He says is ours.

You see failures—by the way, I'm one, are you one?—failures who are willing to understand what they are not and they are willing to admit and to assess and to accept their failures and get up and trust God in a repentant heart and say, "Oh God, I can't, You never said I could; You can, You always said You would," they walk in the victory and nobody can explain it. They look at us and they say, "There's got to be a God around here somewhere cuz' I know that person, but that person's walking in a victory I've never seen before."

Our almighty God! His power confuses the enemy. Sin has no power, none whatsoever, none, when we are walking in obedience to Him. All these things are taking place at the same time, remember. I'm making it look like three different things, but it all happened so quickly I don't know how to preach it any other way.

God's power crushes the enemy

Secondly, God's power not only confuses the enemy, God's power crushes the enemy. I mean, in a crushing blow. What you are going to see now it just exciting. In our possessing what God has given to us, the world, the flesh, and the devil just wilt in His presence. All are crushed by His power. Victory is not us overcoming sin.

Roy Hession was like a mentor to me. He wrote *The Calvary Road* and eight other Christian classics. Roy had been in my home many times and I remember one time sitting there with him. And I said, "Brother Roy, I've confessed this particular sin so many times, I'm sick of confessing it." I said, "The moment I think I've confessed it and admitted it, I get up off my knees and it just drives me crazy all day long." I said, "Roy, what's wrong with me? Would you help me? What's wrong with me?" He was so sweet. He patted my hand and he said, "Oh son, son. You just don't understand do you?" Obviously, I didn't have a clue. He said, "Victory," listen to this, if you'll hear it, it will release you this morning, "Victory is never you overcoming sin. Victory is Jesus overcoming you."

And it dawned on me what my problem was. Well, I'll be! I've been looking at the enemy, I hadn't been looking at the Savior. If you spend your life looking at the sin, it's going to wear you out. Spend your life looking at the Savior. Say yes to Him and He confuses the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He crushes it in your midst. It wilts in His presence. When it's no longer me, but Him,

that's living grace. Then I can walk in that victory. Victory is what He has already given to you and me.

What we see now is so obvious nobody can miss it. There are times when the enemy comes against us and God just simply chooses to let the victory come and be seen in such a way that nobody misses it. There are times when He doesn't do it this way, but in this one He certainly does. I love this. Look at verse 11, look at what He does as Joshua and his men honor covenant. Verse 11, "As they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the Lord [now look at this] threw huge stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword." Is that awesome or what! God throwing hailstones at them.

I just love the Hebrew. I love the picturesque way in which it is written. By the way, He throws a strike every time. I just wanted you to know that. He doesn't miss. Can't you just see them running around and shfeew throwing those hailstones from heaven. There were more who died from the hailstones than Israel killed with the sword. Is there any question who's winning this battle. Anybody got any question about that? Imagine the fear in the enemy when they realized they were not just fighting against Israel? Uh oh! You know that's a perfect time to say that, "Uh oh! We just messed up. We're fighting with the God of Israel." Most importantly, God was fighting them from heaven. I tell you something, that sends a signal to people that are enemies of the cross. That sends a signal in a hurry.

Paul on the Damascus road learned you don't mess with God's people, and you don't mess with the God of the people. See, a lot of people don't understand that. They don't realize that God fights for us. He is the warrior. He is in us. He is the victor. And you don't mess with God's people, and you don't mess with the God of those people. And whether or not He chooses to let everybody see the victory He's going to bring now, I don't know, but there'll come a day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. They'll understand some day. They'll understand it.

Acts 9:1 when Saul was on his way to persecute Christians. Here's a religious bigot, and here he was going down the road to persecute more Christians. Stood there and watched Stephen stoned to death; who becomes the apostle Paul, by the way, in the New Testament if you don't know who I'm talking about. It says, verse 1, "Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priests and asked for letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus so that if there be found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." And verse 3 says, "As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul why are you persecuting [who?] Me.'" Do you think Paul ever had a clue that he was persecuting Him? Not on your life. He thought these believers, the Way, the disciples were a threat. Well, yeah they were in a different way. Saul didn't realize he was up against, not just the people, he was up against the God of the people. Why? Because they're in covenant.

The same covenant of the Old Testament, that same language, is brought into Hebrews 8:6, "We are of a better covenant. We entered in to the way of death when we came to salvation." We exchanged robes with Him. He wore my robe of humanity to the cross so that I might wear His robe of righteousness. He exchanged belts with me and said, "Wayne, I'm going to be your strength." He even exchanged names, and I get to be called Christian. I am in covenant with God. And He says, "I will fight for you. I will deal with your spiritual enemies of the world, the flesh and the devil. If you'll say yes to me, I'll let you walk in victory that the world cannot miss. I'll crush the enemy in front of you."

God is the one who conquers sin in our lives, not us. If you've ever tried, anybody can stop doing anything. But what did Jesus say to the Pharisees? Oh yeah! You don't commit adultery, but if you have lust in your heart, you've already committed adultery. What He's telling them is, "You can't conquer sin, but I can conquer you. And I'll let you walk in victory that you've never known before."

God consumes the enemy

God confused the enemy; God crushed the enemy; used a bunch of failures. Isn't that awesome! God uses the foolish always to confound the wise. He loves the weak to confound the strong. But there's a third thing that God did very supernaturally, you can't miss it. Thirdly, God consumes the enemy. There's nothing left of the enemy to even fight. I mean, hopefully you're seeing this as one thing: confuse, crush and consume as one thing. We are just taking it apart so that we can better get a look at it. Like a magnifying glass, we're spreading it out. We're looking at it in a clearer picture.

Sin has no chance when we are possessing the life we have in Christ, none whatsoever. This is why I preach the Christ life. This is why I preach living grace. It's the message everybody's desperate for, but how many people even know they need it. To totally defeat the enemy, they needed the light of day. Darkness was a nemesis to them. They had to defeat them in the daylight or they could hide and get away from them in the dark. So Joshua was moved by God to ask Him to prolong the day.

In verse 12, "Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel. And he said in the sight of Israel." Now you have to understand, God's initiating all of this. "O sun, stand still at Gibeon." Joshua is saying this. "And O moon in the valley of Aijalon." And verse 13 says, "So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged

itself of their enemies.”

And then its given an historical proof, they had some books evidently that they would record heroes of the faith and how God intervened and worked in their lives, and it was called the book of Jashar. “And is it not written in the book of Jashar,” see this was written after the fact. And he looks back and he says, hey “is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.” The hail had come from the clouds, you know that. That’s where the moisture is. Hail came out of the clouds. But to show that Israel’s help came from God who controls the sun and the moon and the stars, God caused the sun and the moon to stand still until the enemy could be totally defeated. God called a halt to the work of nature in order for the enemy to be consumed.

It is obvious that Joshua was quickened in his spirit. I want to keep saying that. God puts the desire in our heart, we just simply voice it back to Him and He gives us the desires of your heart. But you have to understand the first part of that. He was quickened to believe that God could do this and that God would do this. And so he spoke and it happened.

The same God who backed the River Jordan up 17 miles when they stepped their foot into the river and the water of God’s will moved. The same God who calls the elements of the wall of Jericho to fall apart and the whole wall to come down. The same God causes the sun and moon to stand still. The skeptics say that God can’t do that; that cannot happen. It takes 15 days for the world to stop spinning and all this kind of stuff. But I want to ask you a question, who are you going to listen to? Are you going to listen to the skeptics or are you going to listen to the scriptures? You see, if you don’t believe this, then you’ve got serious questions about who God is and how creation came about to begin with.

God created the sun and the moon. Genesis 1:6 says, “God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He made the stars also.” And one day He, in His sovereign power, will darken that sun and make the moon turn to blood. In Revelations 6:12, “I looked when he broke the sixth seal and there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair and the whole moon became like blood.”

If you want to know what God is like and how God made this world, Psalms 19:1 says, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech and night to night reveals knowledge.” In other words, a message is being preached with no sound to it. It says in verse 3, “There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard.” Just watching the sun come up in the morning, just watching the moon at night—it’s telling you something. It’s a sermon being preached. Verse 4, “Their line has gone out throughout all of the earth and their utterance to the end of the world. In them, He has placed a tent for the sun which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.” And that means the day after the wedding night. And he walks out of that chamber with a smile on his face. I’m sorry, but that’s what it means. It rejoices. “It rejoices as a strong man has run its course.” And then he says in verse 6, “Its rising from one end of the heavens and its circuit to the other end of them and there is nothing hidden from its heat.” God. The heavens are declaring the glory of God. He made them all. Same God who stepped out on nothing for there was nothing to step out on—and the same God who spoke and created everything—and nobody said anything for there was not anybody to say anything—caused the sun to stop still and the moon to stand still and it was daylight until the enemy was consumed.

Oh, thank God there is no darkness with Him. Thank God when I walk in the light, the enemy is confused. The enemy is crushed and the enemy is consumed. To me that’s the greatest message of grace I have ever heard. You don’t know who you have as your pastor. You don’t know the failure I’ve been in my life. But, listen, on that day when God overwhelmed me, God said, “Wayne, I love you in spite of you. You haven’t done a single thing that I didn’t know about before the foundations of this earth. Oh, Wayne, Wayne, trust Me, trust Me, and I’ll defeat the very thing that’s crushed you all of these years. Just say yes to Me.”

That’s what Christianity is, folks. You know, I can preach it until I fall on the floor. Can we ever grasp it? It will be by the revelation of the Holy Spirit of God. God’s power in the life of those who obey Him is unmistakable. Verse 14 says, “There was no daylight like it before or after it.” I’ll tell you one thing, when you deal with the enemies of your life and God gives you the victory, He promises you, actually, He’s given it, but when you experience it, there will be no day like it. It’s incredible! When the Lord listened to the voice of a man and the Lord fought for Israel.

Verse 15 says that “Joshua and all Israel returned with him to the camp of Gilgal.” The rest of chapter 10 I’m not even going to preach, because it’s a blow by blow account of how the enemy was completely destroyed. We don’t need to go through that. It’s just one victory after the other. In verse 41, “Joshua stuck them from Kadesh-barnea even as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen even as far as Gibeon. Joshua captured all these kings and their lands at one time, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. Joshua and all Israel with him, returned to the camp of Gilgal.”

When we say yes to God, instantly, instantly sin is confused. The world, the flesh and the devil have no plan. They can’t touch us. But immediately the enemy is crushed. It wilts in His presence. And immediately it consumes the enemy. And that old lustful bent some people might have suddenly has no power. And that old power covetousness in some people’s lives suddenly has no power.

And that old bitterness that people have been harboring in their life, suddenly has no power. And we begin to experience Him and what He can do in our life.

Now, let's bring it down to where we live. Let me ask you a question this morning. Have you been a failure in your life? If you haven't, would you talk to me after the service? I'd like to meet somebody that hasn't been. Here's the question: Have you admitted or are you too proud to admit it? Have you been blaming everybody else for your own personal choices for all these years? Do you think that somehow closure is going to a person without going to Jesus and having it resolved under the blood of Jesus? Have you missed the point? Have you assessed as to why it happened in your life? Have you learned from it? Have you accepted the results? By the way, have you assessed that you know why you failed—because you didn't consult the Lord? That's always the reason for failure. And have you accepted the consequences? In the mercy of God are you willing to get up off the floor and move on? If you are, strap your seatbelt on, my friend, because the very thing that defeated you before is the very thing He has power over now in your life.

That's grace, folks. That's who Jesus is in our life. Say this: Confused, crushed, and consumed in the instant when we say yes to Him and to His will and to His word. Sin has no more power.

You know in the South, the state bird in most states is the mosquito. You know we had those little things, those little mosquito traps. You know what I'm talking about. You hang it up and it has a little light on it and mosquitoes are attracted to light. Now, you don't get out on the porch with it, you get behind a screen so that you don't have to be adversely affected. And you hang that little thing up there, and that little mosquito trap has that little light on it. And it's just glowing, glowing, glowing and those mosquitoes EEEE. Don't you hate the sound of them? And I've been deer hunting in the swamps of North Carolina sitting up in a tree stand and EEEEE. And the deer are down there, watch that, swatting those mosquitoes. And you watch those mosquitoes coming for the light EEEEE. And all of the sudden they'll run in to the light and what happens? ZIP! Do you love that or what? I could sit for hours and do that. This is good stuff. Mosquitoes being slain by the thousands. EEEEE and in an instant. Zip! That sound becomes melodious in my mind. Zip! Zip! Zip! I want you to think of that, because it took a long time to say what happens the moment you say yes to Christ. The moment you say yes to Christ.

You know what our problem is, folks? Look in the mirror tomorrow morning and you'll find out what your problem is. We live in a world that seems like there's no answers. Are you kidding me? We have the answer, and it's Jesus Christ. And He conquered sin the flesh and the devil and the grave. Now He lives in you. Possess what you have. He is your victory. You don't get it. You have it. But the way you received Him is the way you walk in Him. As you therefore received Christ Jesus, so walk you in Him. And the moment you do, Zip! Zip!

Joshua 14

God's Divine Patience

Would you turn with me to Joshua 14. You're going to wonder why I'm skipping the last of chapter 10, chapter 11, chapter 12, and chapter 13. Well, I'll explain it to you, so quit worrying. I want to talk today about God's Divine Patience. I'm not real good on titles, but that's the best I could come up with. God's Divine Patience. And I'm not talking about how He deals with us; I'm talking about what He creates within us that causes us to be willing to wait upon the Lord. Patience is not gritting your teeth, forcing a grin, and bearing it. That's not what patience is.

I thought of what it wasn't. When I was growing up, my father took me fishing when I was little. I caught my first limit of rainbow trout when I was 8 years old—on a fly rod, by the way. Of course, I don't know how to do a lot of things, but I at least know that much. Daddy started teaching me to bass fish at Carvins Cove Lake outside of Roanoke, Virginia. We'd rent a little boat. We'd have to rent a 12-footer because that's all we could afford. We had a motor. Yes, sir, we had a motor, three and a half horse power! That thing! You could crawl faster than that motor would push you around the lake. But we were proud. We didn't know what a trolling motor was. Back in those days they didn't even have one.

And so, as we were moving down the lake, early in the morning, Daddy would have to take an extra little sack with him, because I would hyperventilate. And Daddy would have to go, "Okay, son, here's the sack, breathe in the sack." I'd get so excited! I just love to fish! And we'd get into that cove, perfect. We knew where to fish; we'd been there before. And moving into that cove early in the morning, the fog was just beginning to lift, daybreak just beginning to start. You could see just outlines of things.

Daddy would always say to me, "Wayne, son, be quiet." We're in a metal boat and it makes a lot of noise. Be quiet! I would try. I really would try! I want you to know that. God is my witness, I tried to be quiet. But I was so excited. I was ready to go.

I remember one morning trying to put my foot down, and the boat turned. And I tried to turn around and when I did, I didn't realize the tackle box was sitting there, because it was still dark enough I didn't see it. The tackle box was metal also. It was open. And I kicked

it, and the whole thing fell over in the bottom of the boat. It was the most awful noise you've ever heard in your life. And I could hear the fish, "Okay, guys, they're here, let's go." You know!

And my dad, bless his heart—this is not what we're talking about today—he was just gritting his teeth. And I knew he was trying his best, "..., 101, 102, 103, 104." I knew he loved me. That's not what I'm talking about, today. That's not the patience I'm talking about; that's just grin and bear it. That's not it!

What I want to talk about is what God produces: a divine patience in our life that enables us to wait upon Him for the promises He's implanted in our lives. We all know, or we should know, that this does come from Him. Galatians 5:22 says, "But the fruit of His Spirit is love, and then out of that comes joy, and peace, and [what's the next one?] patience." We know where it comes from. Anybody with any spiritual sense knows that divine patience has to flow out of God. It's not something we can come up with. It's something He produces in our life.

But I'm not going to talk about the source of it, where it comes from. What I want to talk about is the other side. What about us? What is it that we can do, or what is it about our lives, what position can we get into, so that we can receive that divine presence? It's a part of His life. And as we are possessing His life—we're studying Israel; they're possessing the land, but we don't have a land, we have a life—and as we possess Him, part of that will be an ability to wait upon Him.

Today as we get into chapter 14, God is working in mighty power, all of His almighty power in the lives of the Israelites. Why? Because they've returned to obeying Him. Now that they are yielded to Him and His will, their enemy is completely helpless; helpless before them as they possess the land that God has given to them. God has just absolutely crippled the enemy. The enemy has no power. God told them in chapter 1, very clearly, "No man will be able to stand before you. No man can take from you what I have given to you, if you'll consider every step holy unto Me." Remember that in chapter 1?

And what a beautiful picture this is to you and me. As we possess the life that Christ has given to us, as we learn to say yes to Him, and we take every step and make it holy unto Him—when we're yielded to Christ, and when we're saying yes to Him—we experience His power. Our enemy is not flesh and blood. Our enemy is the world, the flesh, and the devil. And all of our enemies, the spiritual enemy that we come up against, is immediately defeated when we say yes to Christ. We saw this last time. It is confused. It is crushed. It is consumed in an instant. When we say yes to God, sin has no power in our lives.

Victory is never us trying to overcome sin; victory is Jesus who has overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. It's Him living in us, overcoming us. Once Israel listened to God, the last part of chapter 10, chapter 11, and chapter 12 is simply a blow-by-blow account of them possessing the land God said was theirs. It's history. When a believer gets into a yielded position, when a believer says yes to God, the rest of his life is history—it's victory, after victory, after victory and this begins to be our testimony to others.

In chapter 13 Joshua's gotten old. That happens to us, you know. In verses 1-6 God outlines for Joshua and in his old age that he's gotten to, He outlines for him the land that has not yet been conquered. Now He said in 13:1, "Now Joshua was old and advanced in years when the Lord said to him, 'You're old and advanced in years [Ha! Ha! He just wanted to make sure Joshua understood that]. And very much of the land remains to be possessed.'"

Now the phrase, "was old and advanced in years," means exactly that. In fact, in the Hebrew it means toward death. You're advancing quickly towards death. He could have been 90 or 100 years old. We'll see later on that Caleb was 85, so this is not a difficult thing to grasp. God's bringing Joshua's old age up probably explains why He tells him to divide the land in verses 2-6. You see, Joshua was probably under the impression that God wanted him to divide the land once it was completely conquered; but God says no, you're getting old, we need to divide it now. We need to divide it now.

Verse 7, "Now, therefore, apportion this land for an inheritance [now watch carefully] to the nine tribes and the half tribe of Manasseh." Now the term nine and a half tribes, if you'll remember, we've studied this, but in case you've been with us, there were two and a half tribes that didn't want to go over to have the land in Canaan. They wanted their land on the other side of the Jordan. That was the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. So there was nine and a half tribes—the other half of Manasseh plus nine tribes—that would actually inherit the land of Canaan. Canaan itself was to be divided amongst these nine and a half tribes.

Verse 8 explains that other half of Manasseh: "With the other half tribe which is Manasseh, the Reubenites, and the Gadites received their inheritance which Moses gave them beyond the Jordan to the East just as Moses the servant of the Lord gave to them." Verses 9-13 of chapter 13 give the general boundaries of these two and a half tribes on that other side of the Jordan. Verse 14 shows that the tribe of Levi doesn't get any land. You say, now wait a minute, Wayne. That's not fair. Hold on! They were the priestly tribe. Even back in the Old Testament, they were to be supported by the tithes and the offerings of the people. Way back in the book of Joshua we find that. The rest of chapter 13 gives the actual specifics, not just general, but specifics of that land that was to be given to the two and a half tribes.

Now chapter 14 begins to deal with the other nine and a half tribes. It gets into it, and actually carries us all the way through chapter 19. But tucked into chapter 14 is the story of a man by the name of Caleb that'll just absolutely bless your heart. God had given him a promise, and now he wanted more than ever to possess what God had given to him, individually to him. God is not concerned with the whole nation—just concerned with the nation—God is also concerned with individuals. Yes, He wants the nation of Israel to possess the land that is theirs, but He's also concerned with individuals, and Caleb is an individual.

God had given Caleb an individual promise 45 years before through Moses, and Caleb is now wanting to go ahead and possess what God had said. Well, he wants to experience his patience. You see, Caleb wanted to experience His patience. Not Caleb's, but God's that He produced in Caleb. Caleb was willing to wait for a promise that was very specific 45 years before. He was willing to wait until God was ready for that promise to be fulfilled. This is where I'm headed today. Look at this man who was willing to wait upon the Lord. What God promises, God is faithful and just to accomplish it in our lives, but now listen—in His time. We must understand that God will speak to our hearts and promise us, but we must also understand it will only come about when God is ready to bring it about.

These times, you may not understand where I'm going today. It comes when you're in the land already. You're already possessing the life. It comes when you're in those times of being in the Word and you're just absorbed with God and His word and His spirit is just so surrounding you. And God, off of the pages of scripture, takes a verse—never out of context in the sense that it will never violate what's said there—but He'll take that verse and He'll burn it into your heart, and God will give you a promise. God will so speak it to you that nobody can take that from you. Now, He will bring that to pass only when He's ready to bring that to pass.

David was the king of Israel long before he ever actually took the throne. Nehemiah, I mean, you can just walk through the Old Testament and see what God had said specifically to individuals, but yet many times it was a long time before that came to fruition. And what we want to talk about is waiting upon the Lord; the divine patience to let God speak to us and then to let Him bring about what He said in His time. Three things are involved with this divine patience of waiting upon the Lord.

Maybe you've been in your time alone with God and God's given you a promise about your children, but you've not seen it come to fruition. But yet, God spoke to your heart. It's not something you went to find and then asked God to bless it. No, you were seeking God, not the promise. But the promise came to you, the ramah, the subjective spoken Word of God to your heart. And He just burned it into your heart. And this promise is so deep inside of you. Now, are you filled with the divine patience to wait for the timing of the Lord to bring this about?

Being satisfied with God—just God

Three things are involved with this divine patience that we see in Caleb that we can grow from today. First of all, it involves being satisfied with God, just God. That's what it involves. You and I will never have patience in this life to wait on the promises of God until we come to the place that we're just simply satisfied with God.

Verse 6: "Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite said to him, 'You know the word which the Lord spoke to Moses, the man of God, concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea.'" Now in our text here, they haven't divided the land with the nine and a half tribes, and what's happening is an interlude. And Caleb is coming to Joshua with a very special request. In verse 6 he's reminding Joshua of a promise that God made to both of them. He doesn't speak yet of the specific promise that God has made to Caleb and this has been 45 years. He reminds Joshua of the promise that God said "You and Caleb will absolutely possess the land. You will go over into that land."

Remember, they were two of the spies that had said, hey, let's go, let's obey God back when Israel had the first chance to possess the land. What he's doing is reminding Joshua of that day when Moses, by the Lord, gave them that promise. Moses had sworn to both of them, by the Lord, which meant that God had given them the promise.

'Caleb says, in verse 6, "You know the word which the Lord spoke to Moses, the man of God, concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea." And then he goes on in verse 7, he says, "I was 40 years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land. And I brought word back to him as it was in my heart." And verse 8, "Nevertheless, my brethren who went up with me, made the heart of the people melt with fear. But I [Caleb speaks for himself] followed the Lord, my God, fully."

And then Caleb refers to the specific promise that God gave to him through Moses in verse 9, "So Moses swore on that day saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever because you have followed the Lord, my God fully.'" Now that is a powerful phrase. In this phrase comes the key to waiting upon God. The phrase "served the Lord fully," or "followed the Lord fully, or wholly," is a powerful phrase. God uses this phrase several times to describe Caleb. Numbers 14:24, "But my servant, Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered and his descendents shall take possession of it."

In Deuteronomy 1:36, "Except Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, he shall see it. And to him and to his sons, I will give the land on which he has set foot because he has followed the Lord fully." In this phrase, followed the Lord fully, is the key as I said. It means literally in

the Hebrew, "He was fulfilled to walk behind Jehovah." He was fulfilled. The word fulfilled means filled full—to the brim. Nothing else was needed in his life. That's the most beautiful thing; he needed nothing else.

Let me ask you a question as we go through this today. What does it take in this life to fulfill you? What does it take? All it took in Caleb's life was to stay behind the Lord and do whatever God told Him to do. That fulfilled Caleb. Whether God ever made the promise come about or not—it didn't matter to him, God just said of him, "He served Me fully." He was totally fulfilled to walk behind Jehovah. Caleb was fulfilled to walk behind Jehovah.

It says he had a different spirit. In contrast to whom? Well, certainly in contrast to those other 10 spies years before and even along the way. They were rebellious. They chose not to believe God. They needed more than just God. They weren't fulfilled with just God. They had to have the other stuff that goes with it.

His lifestyle was so apparent that even God said he fully followed Me. How would you like on your tombstone to say, "He fully followed God." Would that not be incredible! The word of God brings that out about Caleb. God, Himself, said this about Caleb.

We live in a day when people have to have so much else than just Jesus. Anything but Jesus it seems. Anything but the word of God; anything but the will of God. I need more and more. How convicting this was as I was studying, I'm telling you! How much of what I have in life is really needed? How much is needed to fulfill Wayne? And it brings us to a sobriety. It brings us to a sanity of what Christianity is. They say in Romania when Jesus is all you have, that's the only time you discover He's all you ever needed. All that fulfilled Caleb was to stay behind Jehovah. Just doing what he said, walking in His will. It wasn't what God did for Him, it was who God was that satisfied Caleb.

If we're going to be patient in possessing the promises God has given to us, we are going to have to come to the place where we are satisfied with God and God alone. Therefore, we don't have strings attached. We don't have agendas that we are getting God to do for us. We're just enjoying Him. A person who is not fully following God, I'm telling you, is a person who has never become satisfied with just God and God alone. That's why we obey our flesh. That's why we go other ways, because we're just not satisfied with Him.

The result in Caleb's life was powerful. It not only affected Caleb, but the promise said, "You will possess the land and you're children." It's incredible how this fell this week and not next week. Next week is Father's Day. Dads, just let me say to you—and all of us have been there. Many of us have our failures, just like Israel. I'm there. I can't point a finger—but I tell you what, it tells us if we get our hearts right with God. We come to the place that we're just satisfied with Him. And I want to tell you something, that spills right into your children. Not only will you possess the promise God has given to you, but your children will possess what has been said to you.

Last week I went up to a youth camp. They made me the group leader for the 9th graders. It's been a long time since I've been around 9th graders. I want to tell you something about 9th graders. I love them! They are just open. They are ready. I had the best time with them and I just thank God for the privilege I had. You know what it brought back to me, though? The 17 years that I spent in youth work—youth and recreation work. And, you know, one of the biggest problems I had when I was in youth work was not the kids, it never has been the kids. Kids are a reflection of their parents. Children are a reflection of their parents. The biggest problem I ever had with young people when I was working with them, was not the young people. They would come to conviction, they would come to where they wanted to be satisfied with Christ. I've seen them do some awesome things in obedience to Him. The problem was their parents that would not live the convictions of their children, because they needed more than God in their lives. And it immediately began to affect those children. It goes both ways. When we come to the place of being satisfied only with God, just with Him and His word and His will, then what happens is it affects those that are around us. And that's just interjected. I picked up that little phrase, "and your seed," or "and your children." It spoke to me.

But if we're going to be willing to wait, if we're going to be able or enabled to wait upon the promise God has given to us, we first of all have got to come to the place, we're just satisfied with Him no matter what He does or doesn't do—we're just satisfied in Him. We don't need anything else. We just don't need anything other than Him.

Learn to trust His timing

Well, secondly, not only does this divine patience talk about being satisfied only with God, but secondly it involves learning to trust His timing. God knows, when He speaks the promise, what He said. I mean, he said it. But He also knows when to bring it about. He's got to prepare us. He's got to get us ready to receive that which He spoke to our hearts.

Verse 10, "Now behold the Lord has let me live, just as He spoke these 45 years from the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses when Israel walked in the wilderness, and now behold, I am 85 years old today." Remember what we learned back in chapter 1 that God doesn't give all that He has for you all at once. He doesn't do that. That's not the Christian life. You experience what you're able to experience. He continues to grow you and expand you so that you began to experience more and more of the Christ who lives within you.

Caleb is in the land, but has not yet possessed what is his. He's in the land. I mean, he's possessing what God says was his in the sense of the nation, but he hasn't yet come to that place of what God has promised to him. Forty five years have gone by, and Caleb has believed God all the way through; continued to follow Him; totally satisfied with God, promise or no promise.

Ron Dunn was a great friend of mine. You may know who he is. He's one of the greatest preachers I've ever known. But Ron Dunn preached a message. I loved to be around him. He so fueled my soul when I heard him. And one day he preached a message in a conference we had at our church. It was out of the book of Job. And the message was: "Would you serve God for nothing?" And that burned a hole in me. I began to realize what we've been talking about. You see, we can't trust God's timing, because we can't trust Him. But when we learn to trust Him, and then just serve Him for nothing, because He's worth it, then that trusting is enabled in our life and we can wait upon the Lord. He's promised us something and if we haven't yet experienced it, we can wait on His timing because we know who He is. We're satisfied by Him. And what we learn is that God's delays are not denials. When God has promised us something, God does not mean, because He delayed, He's denying us that promise. No, sir!

Let me illustrate this to you from the New Testament. Turn to John 11, one of the most beautiful experiences in the life of Jesus and His disciples. He has just about been caught by the people over in Judea, the Pharisees, etc.; He escaped. They went over to Galilee and now He gets a message. In John 11:1: "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha." You remember those two; they stand out in the New Testament. And in verse 2, "it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick." He goes to great pains to show you who this family is.

And then in verse 3, "So the sisters sent word to Him saying, 'Lord, behold he whom You love is sick.'" Do you notice anything missing in that message? In other words, "Lord, would you get here! He whom You love is sick. Do you understand what I'm saying? If you would get here, He'd be healed. Now get over here! He whom you love is sick." It just sort of leaves that impression. It's there, but it's not written.

And look in verse 4, "But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." He was about to do something that was going to pull the trigger on sending Him to the cross, which was the very reason He came to begin with. He knew that, but His disciples didn't have a clue.

Verse 5, "Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." You read that in English and you don't get it. But when you put it in the Greek you get it. That's imperfect tense. What does that mean? It means He was loving them all along. It means He was doing what was best for them because He loved them all along. If you didn't have that little verse there in verse 5, verse 6 would really seem strange. He was loving them; He knew the timing.

Look at verse 6, "So when He heard that he was sick, He hurried to the place so He could heal him." Is that what your Bible says? Look what He did. He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. Now, do you think that didn't grate on Martha and Mary? Well, if you read the whole chapter, you'll understand how bad it irritated them. When He finally does get there: "Where have You been? Man, if You would have been here, he wouldn't have died and the whole thing's lost." But He was loving them. He's always loving us when He doesn't bring it to pass what He's promised us, because His timing is perfect. We don't know His timing.

It says in verse 7, "Then after this He said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.'" Let us go to Judea again. There's been trouble in Judea. They knew this. And look how these lunkheads answer Him. They couldn't get a job by the way in today's world. "The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You. Are You [are you] going there again?'" Not are we going there again; they've already made up their minds. They're not going! They get You, Jesus, they get us. We're staying here. You're going there again?!

Verse 9, "And Jesus answered are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world." You see, when you are satisfied and fulfilled to stay behind Jehovah and do whatever He says, you're safe. You're not safe when you say no to Him, because that's darkness; and darkness causes you to stumble. Verse 10, "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him."

Verse 11, "This He said, and after that He said to them, 'Our friend, Lazarus, has fallen asleep, but I go so that I may awaken him out of sleep.'" I'm not going to finish the chapter, but it's just an awesome story. I could hear the disciples having a party. "Oh, that's great, he's really not sick, he's just asleep. Oh, man, we don't have to go." And then He turns around and says, "Listen, he's dead." I was preaching this one time and I said "D-E-A-D, he's dead." He didn't speak in English, but anyway. Whatever He said, He got the point across.

He knew what He was up to. His delays—He stayed back two days—were not denials of a promise. You see, Martha and Mary wanted healing. "If you could have been here!" Both of them said the same thing to Him when He got there. "If you could have been here, he wouldn't have died." Jesus didn't want to heal him, Jesus wanted a resurrection. And His timing is perfect. It's incredible

when our little brain, minds and brains, get involved in trying to figure out why God hasn't done this or that in our lives. And we're not even satisfied with Him. You see that's just a reflection of the first one. These all flow out of each other. If I'm satisfied with Him, then I know who He is.

Revival's going to break out all over the place here. I believe it with all my heart. I don't ever pray that I don't believe that. If I live to see it, I'm grateful. I'm trying to learn now to just be satisfied with Him whether He ever brings it about or not. That's okay with me. I'm trying to learn to just be satisfied with Him; because when you are, then you can wait upon the promises. Whether you ever experience them or not that doesn't matter. That doesn't take away from the fact that what God says He's going to do, He will do. I don't know if it will be in a service. I don't know if it will be in the worship time. I don't know if it will be in the classroom. I don't know how He's going to do it, but it's going to happen. God's going to do a work here: a breaking work, a work of grace. He's going to do it in such a way that nobody can argue with it. Everybody can stand back and say, "God is moving here!" And it's not going to be for our benefit, it's going to be for the whole world. I believe that with every fiber of my being. Why? Because God spoke that to my heart. Now, am I willing to wait? Only to the measure that I'm satisfied with Him and Him alone, whether He brings it to pass in my lifetime or not.

What has God said to you? What has God said to you? Maybe it's about your children. Maybe it's about another area of your life. And you've become a little bitter and you're shaking that fist in God's face saying: "God, this doesn't work. It doesn't work. I'm looking around me, and I don't see the promise coming about." All that is, is an indicator that something other than Jesus fulfills your life. He doesn't have to do anything to satisfy us. And when we get to that place, and it's not like an arrival, but to that awakening and to that awareness, then what happens is, we have the patience to wait upon Him. Caleb had faithfully waited 45 years to possess what God has promised him, all the while he was fully, wholly, totally and patiently obeying God. Satisfied with Him. You see, He trusted the God who made the promise; therefore, he could wait on the timing of the Lord to bring it about.

God has to bring us from A to B

So divine patience what does it involve, Wayne? On my part, what does it involve? It involves me being satisfied with just God, just Him. Just Christ in my life. That's all. And it involves trusting the timing of the Lord.

Thirdly, God has to bring us from A to B. If He's given us a promise at A and the promise is going to be fulfilled at B, He's got to strengthen us so we're ready when the promise is fulfilled. It involves being resting in the strength of God. God's strength had sustained Caleb. Why? Because he had wholly followed God; because he was patiently waiting on what God had promised. And God was sustaining him all the way until he was 85 years old. For 45 years He sustained him.

But it has to have caught your attention what he says here in verse 11 if you read ahead of me. Look at this: "I am still as strong today." Now, he speaks of physical strength. In our walk, in our possessing the life God has given us, we speak of spiritual strength. "I'm still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me. As my strength was then, so my strength is now for war and for going out and coming in." Wow! At 85 years old he's as strong as he was 45 years before. God had sustained him. God had strengthened him. Why? To get him and keep him ready for when the promise was to be fulfilled.

Possessing what God has promised, even after long periods of waiting, is not without difficulty. You're still going to have some battles to fight. When God brings the promise, it is surrounded with battles. He knows that, and so God has sustained him to be ready for this time. We have seen this with the nation of Israel when they finally got into the land. Jericho was the first battle. There the battles began. When you start possessing the life, the battles are there. And when God fulfills His promise, it's not without difficulty. We want to focus on this truth now, very carefully, as we look at it.

In verse 12, "Now then, give me this hill country about which the Lord spoke on that day. For you heard on that day how the Anakim were there with great fortified cities. Perhaps the Lord will be with me and I will drive them out as the Lord has spoken." It was the Anakim that caused fear in the hearts of the 10 spies when they came back the first time they had their opportunity to possess the land. Joshua and Caleb came back. They saw the Anakim, but they said, "Hey, they're a piece of cake. We can eat them for lunch! Let's just go. God is with us." But the other 10, "Oh! No!" That little committee got together and decided unanimously that they should not go. So that whole nation, the whole nation at that time, the whole generation, walked around Mt. Sinai for 40 years and died in the wilderness. But the whole reason they were so afraid were these Anakim.

And look at this, the Anakim inhabit the very land that Caleb wants. Watch this, this is so good! But he's ready in God's strength. See, in the meantime, in between the time God gives you the promise and the time God fulfills that promise, there's a sustaining and there's a strengthening that God brings into our life getting us ready for when that moment comes. At 85 he didn't retire, he just simply re-fired. He was as strong as he ever was. Boy what a word that is for us in our day.

The word Anakim describes giant people; long necks, strong, strongest people in all of Canaan; long necks, strong, giant, tall people. They were descendants of Anak. The word Anak has the idea of long neck and the idea of being tall. It describes a very ferocious group of people.

Caleb had no fear to take what God had given to him. No fear whatsoever. He said, "I'm going to walk right in and take it from the very hands of the strongest people in Canaan." Why? How could he be that way? Because he'd been sustained all the way. God's been strengthening him. Why? Because he's satisfied only in God. Why? Because he's trusting in God to bring it about when the timing was right. He looked to the strengthening of God.

He knows it will be difficult. That little phrase in verse 12, "Perhaps the Lord will be with me, and I will drive them out as the Lord has spoken." That word "perhaps" is written in English, and I have to apologize for our own language. It doesn't express what it says in the Hebrew. The Hebrew expresses no doubt at all. He's not doubting God. What he's saying is, if we could say it better, it would say: "I know that there'll be difficulty in the battle. I know that. I understand that." It's written as if it's some kind of doubt that he has towards God. He says, "I know that it will not be easy, but I'm resting in the strength of God."

In verse 13 look what happens, "So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb, the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance." Heard of Hebron in the news? "Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day because he followed the Lord God of Israel fully." Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath Arba. Now what in the world is that, Wayne? "For Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. Then the land had rest from war," verse 15. Man, they had changed the name because it was such a victory when Caleb took that land.

You know, back in Isaiah, if you turn there with me, Isaiah 40:31, God is encouraging Israel with some promises: promises that many of them would never actually see; promises that would one day be fulfilled. He says something to them that depicts what we've been studying. And He says in verse 31, "Yet those who wait for the Lord." I've heard people talk about that as some passivity; like to go sit under a tree. What does waiting mean, Wayne? It means being satisfied with God and God alone. It means trusting the time of God and it means involving the resting and strength of God until God brings about the promise. It's a verb. It's something you do. Caleb is the perfect example. Look at the verse. You see it in Caleb, "Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles."

Ever been around an eagle? I've been up in Alaska, Minnesota, I've been all over. I've watched in many places, even in Chattanooga, there was some breed of eagle that was there and swarmed down over the lake there. It was awesome! The power of that bird: huge wing span, some of them can be six feet. And when it pumps those wings one time and pumps those wings a second time, it's just shoving itself higher and higher and it comes down and grabs a huge fish with one swoop of its claw. Grabs that fish and comes up—the power that's in those wings as it moves. He'll rise up with wings as eagles.

Look at this, "They will run and not get tired." Won't you love to live in this? "They will walk and they will not become weary." No matter what pace it is that God puts them on, they will run and they will walk. And there will be no fainting because there's new strength. And when those promises come, and they did, the main promise in Isaiah is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it did come! And when He came, there were many who were ready for that promise to be fulfilled.

What promise has God spoken to you? Let's just go to the very first point, because that's the bottom line of the message. What does it take in this life to fulfill you other than God? And if there's anything that you can put in to fill in those blanks, no wonder you're hurrying God and you're impatient for Him to bring about His promise. No wonder there's no strengthening in your life. You're running and you're weary, and you're walking and you're fainting. Because, you see, it all hinges on that first one. He was totally fulfilled by being behind Jehovah; by just saying, yes to Him. If you ever pray for this preacher, you pray that I can get to that point to where there's nothing that I could put in that blank—that Jesus is enough.

Joshua 20

Christ, our refuge

Turn to Joshua 20. You say, "Wayne, you are skipping chapters. This is not like you." Well, I'm going to explain that before the time is over. Hopefully, you'll understand. I want to preach today on the subject of Christ, our refuge.

Now, let's be reminded, the reason we're studying Joshua is so that we might learn from them how to possess the life that we have in Christ Jesus. "Wayne, you can't do that." Yes we can; 1 Corinthians 10:6 says, "All of these things happened to Israel for our example." So we're going to go to school on them.

You see, God gave them a land. He gave them an external covenant. Our covenant is internal. And as they had to learn how to possess the land that God had given them, we have to learn how to possess the life that is ours in Christ. They had to learn to possess that land by faith; we have to learn to possess what we already have by faith—to experience it and to walk and live in it. Now, for this reason, and we said this in chapter 1, we really can't get into the land part of it. That was strictly given to Israel. You

have to be so careful when you handle the Old Testament. However, we're looking at the character of God and how He works with His people. We can't get into that land. And much of Joshua that we skipped over is simply a blueprint of the land that God gave to them. And it's very carefully outlined.

In chapters 11 and 13, amongst other things, outlines the land that the two and a half tribes inherited on the east side of the Jordan. They didn't want the land on the west side, which is Canaan, which became Israel. They wanted land on the east side of the river. Those two tribes were Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. So we skipped over chapter 11 and chapter 12. That's the land. We can't really get into that. As we saw the last time, nine and a half tribes were to divide the land on the west side of the Jordan River. That's what's known then as Canaan and came to be known later on as Israel.

From chapter 14 to chapter 19 we have the specific dimensions of that land that is given to those nine and a half tribes on the west side of the Jordan River. Chapter 15, ironically, outlines the land for the tribe of Judah. It's interesting He starts with Judah. Judah's not mentioned as a preeminent tribe earlier on, but it's beginning to take preeminence. And you know that the line that Jesus is going to get His humanity is going to come through the tribe of Judah, through the line of David, and then Jesus will be born of a virgin in the New Testament. Judah begins to come to the forefront. A whole chapter's dedicated to the land given to Judah.

In chapters 16-17 it outlines the land given to Ephraim and to Manasseh, sons of Joseph. Now, I don't know if you remembered they were sons of Joseph. Just a half tribe of Manasseh; the other half is on the other side of the river. Chapter 18 tells us the headquarters has been in Gilgal. They always go back to camp at Gilgal. But Gilgal is going to shift now. It's going to go to Shiloh, and Shiloh is where the tabernacle will be set up. In chapter 18 also, verses 11-28, it outlines the land allotted to the tribe of Benjamin.

In 19:1-9 it outlines the land allotted to the tribe of Simeon. In 19:10-16 it outlines the land allotted to the tribe of Zebulun. And in verses 17-23 of that chapter it outlines the land allotted to the tribe of Issachar. And in verse 24-31 of that chapter it outlines the land allotted to the tribe of Asher. And then in verse 32-39 it outlines the land allotted to the tribe of Naphtali. And the last part of that chapter, 40-48, it outlines the land allotted to the tribe of Dan.

We could have jumped in here or there. There's a place where they give Joseph his city to dwell in. There's a place in there that describes Caleb taking the land that God had given him, the land of Hebron. But I didn't sense that that's where we needed to camp out. We're moving today to chapter 20 where we have our text that we're going to look at this morning.

We have technically—and what a great time to say this on Father's Day—technically, we've been looking at God the perfect Father and how He works with His people. He still does the same with you and with me. In chapter 1 we saw how He'll create a flood. He'll take our circumstances and flood them. He'll make them overwhelming to us so that we can learn how to walk by faith. We learn how to get our feet wet and how to step into the water of His will. When we do, we experience His power as the Jordan backed up 17 miles. They began to realize, wait a minute, this is what it's all about by saying yes to Him.

In chapter 2 we saw that the Lord always goes before us. Nothing ever gets to us that doesn't go by Him first. That's such a comforting thought. They send the two spies over. God's already prepared Rahab and she's a believer. And she hides the spies and gives them information they needed to know which was the peoples' hearts of that whole land had melted. The land was theirs.

In chapter 3 we saw how the Ark went before them. The priest had to carry that Ark. The Ark was a picture of God's presence with the people. He led them across that river. He's the one that's always in front, behind, He's beneath, He's above and He lives in us. The Ark to us is the Lord Jesus Christ: a beautiful picture that we studied together.

In chapter 4 they crossed over and we saw how He leads them right into the victory and shows them what it is to walk with Him.

In chapter 5 we saw that once we experience His life, we finally enter into the spiritual battles of life. If you're not walking with Him, you're not in any spiritual battle. Neither am I, if I'm not walking with Him. I'm just a prisoner of my own choices. But He is the one who not only takes us through the circumstances of life; we learned in chapter 5, He is our divine captain. He's our warrior. Like Ephesians says, He's the garment, but He's also the armor.

In chapter 6, that's when they went against Jericho, and the divine captain appeared to Joshua. In chapter 6 we saw how the overwhelming power of God is manifest to people that trust Him and how easily the enemy is defeated when we say, yes, to Him.

In chapter 7 we saw the devastating results of sin in the camp. Achan didn't understand community. He didn't understand covenant. He, essentially, didn't realize that if he's in covenant with God, he's in covenant with others, and that his sin would not just affect him, but affect others in the camp. As a result, it happened that way. They went up against Ai, not knowing what Achan had done by taking the spoils of war from Jericho, and they were miserably defeated.

Well, in chapter 8 they dealt with that sin. And we saw when we confess and repent of our sin, God doesn't kick us out. God understands that we're going to sin. God understands our imperfection—and He goes ahead and uses them once again. They come

to the place of Shechem and they are between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. They renew their covenant. A beautiful picture of how they need to be reminded what this is all about. This is not a game.

And then in chapter 9 we see how flesh is so fickle. How easily Joshua and the leadership of all of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites told them they were from a foreign country when in reality they were the next battle. And God had told them not to make covenant with the enemy, but they did. They were deceived into making that. But they admitted their failure. They assessed as to why it happened and they accepted the consequences and what I love about them is, they got up and moved on. You see, failure is allowed in the vocabulary of the believer. God understands that. Failure is a tool that will drive us to our depending on Him.

And in chapter 10 we saw how God worked in mighty power once now that they are again saying yes to Him. He threw hailstones at the enemy from heaven. I love that! And not only that, He caused the sun and the moon to stand still for a single day so that Israel might win the battle. Well, the last part of chapter 10 is them defeating the five kings. Chapter 11 and chapter 12 we've already seen is he gets into dividing the land.

Chapter 14 we have a little interlude with Caleb, who has been a man willing to wait upon the Lord for 45 years he's waited on that promise: satisfied with God, trusting His timing, resting in His strength. And finally, after 45 years, he gets the land called Hebron. Hebron, oddly enough, becomes one of the cities that we're going to talk about even today.

Well, that brings us to chapter 20. Now let me introduce my thoughts in chapter 20. We're going to be looking at the six cities of refuge that they created and for specific reason. Let me just introduce it by saying this, though. Have you ever offended somebody and in no way intended to do it? It wasn't premeditated. Perhaps, it was a sinful thing, but you didn't premeditate that, it came out. We all offend in many ways, James says, and particularly in what we say. Have you ever done that and you didn't intend to? Besides me, would you raise your hand? Anyone besides me? Well, welcome to the normal Christian life.

Now here's the key! Did they receive it when you went and asked forgiveness or did they turn against you? They judged your motive, even though it was not premeditated. And did they tell other people who have now judged your motive and here you are. You didn't intend it to start with. You know you've offended them by how they've responded. You've gone to them, done everything you know to do, and they won't let you off of the hook. Has that ever happened to you? Well, today, hopefully this will encourage you, because that's exactly what we're going to be dealing with.

In the days of Joshua there was a practice when somebody killed somebody with premeditation—they thought it up, they went after and killed the person—then a family member could avenge that person's death by taking the person's life that killed them. Now, that was just their times. But there were times that the cause of death was unintentional. It was not premeditated. It wasn't meant. And they had a special place for this. They had six cities of refuge. If you killed your brother and it was unintentional, you could run to one of these six cities of refuge. They would meet you at the gate and you would state your case. If the high priest agreed with what you said, you could come in and have refuge. You could have asylum inside of that city. And as long as that high priest lived, then you could stay in that city. You were safe in the city of refuge.

Numbers 35:9, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them when you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge that the manslayer who has killed any person unintentionally may flee there. The cities shall be to you as a refuge from the avenger so that the manslayer will not die until he stands before the congregation for trial. The cities which you are to give shall be your six cities of refuge. You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan. They are to be cities of refuge. These six cities shall be for refuge for the sons of Israel and the alien and for the sojourner among you that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there.'"

So in fulfillment of His word, God has spoken this to Moses before then had crossed over into the land. Now, in fulfillment of this they create, now that the land has been divided, they create these six cities of refuge. Three on the east side of the Jordan River and three on the west side of the Jordan River. This is for the innocent person. The person who delivered a blow to somebody and it killed him, but he never intended it and, therefore he has a reprieve. He has an asylum. He has a place he can run to—these six cities of refuge.

So we have in Joshua 20:1 the creating of those six cities. "Then the Lord spoke to Joshua saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel saying designate the cities of refuge of which I spoke to you through Moses. That the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee there and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood.'"

Now you may say, "How in the world could you kill somebody accidentally?" Well, Deuteronomy 19 explains it, "Now, this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live. When he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously. As when a man goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the ax to cut down the tree, and the iron head slips off the handle and strikes his friends so that he dies, he may flee to one of these cities and live. Otherwise, the avenger of blood might

pursue the manslayer and in the heat of his anger overtake him because the way is long, and take his life, though he was not deserving of death since he had not hated him previously.” So what I want you to catch in this thing is premeditation and this which is unintentional. It happened, but it was unintentional.

So in Joshua 20:4 we go back and finish our text, “He shall flee to one of those cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, and they shall take him into the city to them and give him a place so that he may dwell among them. Now, if the avenger of blood pursues him anyway, then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand. He is safe there, because he struck his neighbor without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand. He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation of judgment, until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Now when the high priest dies, then he leaves the city. Then the manslayer shall return to his own city and to his own house to the city from which he fled.”

Now, these were known cities of refuge. A person who had taken the life of another unintentionally could flee there. The roads were well-kept. The signs were marked everywhere—“City of refuge”—to make sure the people knew where their avenue of escape was. They always had access to it. As long as the high priest lived, they were safe. When he died, then they had to leave that city.

Now in our lives as believers in the new covenant, you’re wondering, “Wayne, how in the world are you going to take six cities of refuge and apply it to the life that we have in Christ Jesus?” Well, let me see if we can do that. As I was studying, and I’m going to share it with you how God spoke it to my heart. Sin is sin in our life in the new covenant. There’s never any excuse; flesh is flesh. Whether it’s intentional or whether it’s unintentional, sin is sin. It must be dealt with. Christ is always our refuge no matter.

But there are two words for sin. There’s a word that has to do with premeditated sin and there’s a word that has to do with unintentional, in the sense that, yes, we make a choice, but we didn’t intend to do that. We didn’t set out to do that. Any time there are two Greek words for anything, you have to discover, not how some German theologian used it, you have to discover how is it used in scripture? What is it trying to tell us? How did the Holy Spirit use that word in scripture?

The first word is hamartia. That’s when the person pulls the bow back, aims: boy, you talk about premeditated. He aims, but he’s aiming at the wrong target. It’s not as much as he misses the target; he hits the wrong target. He pulls it back and shoots and that’s the word, hamartia. That’s the intentional, premeditated. I mean you thought it through. You made the choice. You knew what you were doing in making that choice.

But there’s another word for sin that’s translated sin in the New Testament, and that’s paraptoma. It means to stumble along side. Even the word itself, the etymology of the word means to lapse in one’s walk. You can even be deceived into this kind of sin. It’s not to plunge headlong, but it’s to fall into. It’s not to jump into, but to fall into. It’s not like the premeditated harsh word for sin which is hamartia. Yes, it’s sin. It still needs to be dealt with.

In Galatians 6:1 it says when you see your brother in a sin, go to him, you that are spiritual. And what is the word that’s used? Paraptoma And what was the sin in the book of Galatians? They didn’t set out to be bad people. They just bought a bill of goods that was wrong. And in doing so, they fell along side. They bought the religion rather than living under grace.

Now, Christ is our refuge for both. He is all six cities combined in one person. We run to Him for premeditated sin. We’ve already seen that with Achan and how we deal with it. But we also run to Him when we have sinned and wounded our brother, delivered a blow to our brother, gone to our brother, and our brother will not let us up, and the avengers began to come because of the people that they’ve told. The people have taken up an offense for this one and now they are coming at us. Where do we run? What do we do? We run to Jesus. We run to Jesus. He is our refuge. Where do we run? We run to Him.

You don’t know this, but when I came to this church, a dear friend of mine, he’s a dear brother, dear family, broke relationship with me. He said there’s no possible way that you can convince me that God’s lead you to go there. And he got really upset. He’d done a whole lot for my ministry that we were in, full time conference work. I did everything I knew to do make it right, but until this day, to this day, he has not spoken a word to me. And you wonder, what do you do? Who do you go to? No telling who they’ve gone to. You think, what do you do about that? That’s my point! That’s my point! We have a refuge and the way is clearly marked. We run to Jesus. He is our refuge.

When I was pastoring in Chattanooga, we had to let a staff member go with some very severe problems in his family. That man, in 72 hours, did more to damage my character and my reputation nationwide, than you can possibly imagine. We sat down and we talked it through. I said, “You know my heart. This is not what this is all about. You know how we’ve worked through it.” But he wouldn’t let me up. And the avengers that came along his side: the avengers of blood. Friends of his began to get on my trail with letters that they would write to me, etc. It was two years before I ever even heard anything from him, and finally one day he called me and apologized to me and asked me to forgive him.

But what do you do? What do you do? You haven’t intended anything. They’ve become judge and they’ve become jury. They’ve

judged your motives. You've gone to them. You've asked them to forgive you. They will not let you up and they are going to bear down on you. They've told enough people that the avengers of blood are on your trail. Where do you run? Where do you run? And that's my message today. You run to Jesus! He is our refuge! As we possess what is ours in Him, we have the safety, we have the safe harbor in Him. He is the safe place. He is where we run. Let's look to Christ our refuge.

These six cities had names, and each name tells us another dimension of Jesus Christ and our life and how He is our refuge. If you're not walking with God this morning, you will not have a clue what I'm talking about. But those of you that are walking with God, you're going to run to this truth because you're going to understand it that quickly. You're going to know what I'm talking about. You're going to know where your refuge is. You're going to know where your solace is. You're going to know where it is that you can find peace and find an audience that will listen to you. He's there and He's available and He's accessible. Run to Him! Run to Him.

God is our holy place

First of all, He is our holy place. Joshua 20:7: "So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali." Now the word Kedesh in the Hebrew means a holy place. The word holy there means a place that is pure. Isn't that awesome! A place which was without defilement; a place which was without corruption; a place that is set apart under God. Christ is our safe place. A place where there are no accusations; a place where truth is upheld and is paramount; a place where we can find rest for our weary souls; and a place where we can find a hearing that somebody will listen to us because they know our heart. They know the situation and they are the eternal judge that we stand before.

As our High Priest, He never dies. And the thing that is so beautiful about this is we never have to leave that place. We never have to go back. We can stay right there. We can live and practice His presence daily in our life. Run to Jesus! Run to Jesus! He is our holy place. He hears us when we cry out to Him. It's so critical to understand this truth in our life, because we live in a fallen earth and we all deal with flesh everyday and we all offend as James says. We need to know that we have a place to where we can run. In Him and in His word we are safe. When we have done what He's asked us to do, when we have gone to seek forgiveness and they won't let us up, when they prejudged our motive, when they have gone to get other avengers of blood and they're on our trail, we're safe in Him.

When I was going through a very difficult time of knowing the truth but not being able to say anything, there's a little tract that a friend of mine gave me: "They can, but you can't." They can go talk, but you can't. You have to keep your mouth shut, but you have a refuge where you can run.

Moody Radio was something that was awesome in our area. Matter of fact, we're going to introduce you to Dr. Joseph Stowell, hopefully. I want you to know him. I want you to know about Moody, what they do, and what they stand for. Dwight L. Moody, you might catch the name, that's where the institution comes from.

Joseph Stowell was on the radio one day and you know what he said! He was talking about this. Now, he didn't use this text or anything, but he was talking about the fact of when you're falsely accused, or when you've offended somebody and you didn't intend to do it and the people won't let you up, they will not forgive you, they've gotten other avengers of blood to come after you. Joseph Stowell said, listen, there are two things that God will use to vindicate you. The first one is truth because God knows the truth. Secondly, it will be time. You're going to have to give it time. It will be in His time.

And I never will forget how that ministered to my heart because I knew he'd been where I'd been and where you've been. When you didn't intentionally seek to do anything, but you've wounded your brother, and you go to him and he won't let you up. He thinks it's premeditated. He judges you as a person and has the avengers of blood on your trail. Run to Jesus! Run to Jesus! Don't run from Him! Run to Him! He is our holy place. We have a true hearing with Him because He knows the situation.

God is our strength

Secondly, He is our strength. You talk about something that will weaken you is when this thing happens in your life, but He becomes our strength as we surely already know. It says, "So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim." Shechem in the Hebrew is the word that means the back or the shoulder. It's the picture of strength, of that which holds something up. In fact, the Old Testament talks about prophecy of Jesus. It says "the government shall be upon His shoulder," picturing the fact that He's holding something up. It rests upon Him.

Christ our refuge supports us when others pursue us unjustly. It is His strength that we're desperate for when we are being wrongly pursued by those who only want to avenge. They've taken up an offense for their brother and they're coming after us. In the context of warfare Paul says in Ephesians 6, which is exactly what this is, he says in verse 10, "Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord [because He is the reservoir of our strength that we run to] and the strength of His might."

In that wonderful prayer that Paul is praying in Colossians 1:9-11, he says, "For this reason, also, since the day we heard of it, we've not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding

so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God,” and then he says this, “strengthened with all power.” In other words, we need to be strengthened if we’re not going to be weak in points. What is it that weakens us? He says, “According to His glorious might for the obtaining of all steadfastness and patience.” And those two words steadfastness and patience are two words implying difficult situations and difficult people.

Christ becomes our strength. He’s the one within us that helps us to bear up under when people are unjustly pursuing us. When we’ve done what God’s told us. We’ve gone to them and they will not let us up; when they’ve pre-judged our motives. He becomes our holy place and He becomes our strength as we possess what is ours in Him.

God is our ally, our friend

Thirdly, He is our ally, our friend. Well, I’ll tell you what, when you are being pursued by those who seek to avenge us, it’s hard to find a friend, isn’t it? It’s hard to find an ally. It’s hard to find the fellowship you’re looking for. It’s hard to find the community. In fact, it makes you feel guilty in a way that’s not God. It makes you feel so beaten down and so weak.

In verse 7 of Joshua 20, “So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), in the hill country of Judah.” Oh, the times in the 41 years of ministry that God has allowed me to have that only in Him could I find the friend that I was looking for. Only in Him could I find the ally, because He knows everything. We don’t have to explain anything to Him, He knows it. We run to His presence. We run to His presence and we find that friend that sticks closer than a brother.

He is our refuge, He is our holy place, He is our strength and He is our ally. To those persecuted people in the New Testament in Asia Minor Peter writes, and it’s so beautiful. He wants them to know they have an ally, they have a friend. He wants them to know that this is God and that God has a plan and even though they are going to suffer for a little while, He has the answer; in Him is the answer. And he says in 1 Peter 1:13, “Therefore, prepare your minds for action. Keep sober in spirit. Keep your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Man, don’t look at what’s going on right now. Look at what’s coming! You haven’t seen anything, yet. The apostle Paul said, “I don’t even want to talk about what’s going on right now. It’s not worthy compared to the glory that is coming one day for His people.”

Oh, what Christ is to us, folks. He is everything we’re looking for. When we’ve been falsely accused, when we’ve done what God’s told us to do, when people prejudice our motives, when people will not let you up and be free to be what God wants you to be, when they seek out others and the avengers of blood are on our trail, He is our city of refuge. Everywhere in scripture the markings are there. Run to Jesus! Run to Jesus! Run to Jesus! Run to Him! He is our refuge!

God is our fortress

Fourthly today, He is our fortress. It says in verse 8, “Beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben.” And that word Bezer can mean a fortress or it can mean gold ore in the sense of treasure. And I think both here are appropriate as we put it together. A fortress and yet a treasure, both are appropriate for Christ.

I love the old hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” Where do you think that came from? It came from people who had been in those valleys, people who had been falsely accused. It came from people who had the avenger of blood on their trail. He is our mighty fortress. He is that fortification that stands around us and lives in us and is above us and is beneath us.

In fact, Paul says in Colossians, “You are hidden in Christ who is in God.” How secure do we need to be! Paul speaks of Christ being our treasure in Colossians 2:3, “In whom is hidden all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge.” He’s our fortress, but in Him we also find our treasure. When we run to Him, He gives us wisdom. He gives us understanding of what to do next and He comforts our heart. His will is good and acceptable and perfect. And when we’re in His presence we can receive it and walk and rest in it. He is our strong tower.

One of my favorite verses, and I love to read through Proverbs over and over again, is Proverbs 18:10, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower.” Don’t you love that verse? “The righteous [those who are living, seeking to say yes to Him], the righteous runs into it and is safe.” When you’re being pursued by those who will not forgive and you’ve done what God’s told you to do, what do you do? You run to Jesus! He is our fortress! And in Him we are safe. He is our treasure!

God is our high place

Fifthly, He is our high place. I love living in Albuquerque. I love being up on the side of the mountain coming down to church especially in the evening when you look down and see the lights of the city looking down at it. You know, when you’re down in the city it doesn’t tell you a whole lot, but when you get up above it, you can understand a whole lot of things; can’t you. Christ exalts us when we come to Him: lifts us up to where we can see it in a clearer perspective. I had a young man last night tell me, “Wayne,

thank you for saying that because I've been down here. I need to get up here. I need to run to Jesus. I need to let Him open my eyes and see the big picture instead of what I think is going on in my life."

It says in verse 8, "Beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad." The word Ramoth means "heights" or it means "high place." What a beautiful picture of Jesus; when we run to Him, the perspective He now gives to us. In fact, He wants us to live there. He's not going to die, so we need to stay there. If we stay there, in the place of refuge, seeking Him and clinging to Him, what happens is He opens our eyes and we see things differently.

In the book of Habakkuk, which one of these days, I pray that God will let me preach because I love that book and I think you'd be encouraged by it. It's an awesome book! The prophet Habakkuk cannot understand why God would raise up the Chaldeans. "What are you doing, God?" And God's trying to show Him, "I'm raising up the enemy which are the epitome of what Israel's becoming and they're going to be used to purify My people." God has to do a real work in Habakkuk to straighten him out. By the third chapter, oh, my goodness, he is completely changed. And it says in 3:19 he says, "The Lord God is my strength," he's finally come to his senses, "and He has made my feet like hinds' feet." That's the feet of a deer that can walk in those high places. It has to have specially designed feet to walk on those short ledges. He says, "He's made my feet like hinds' feet and makes me walk"—He makes me walk, He makes me walk; one translator says, He drives me to my high places—"He makes me walk on my high places." Why, because that's what I'm designed to do. In Him I'm designed to walk on the high places. And when you run to Him who is your refuge He clears the picture so that we can understand what we could not understand before. It's an awesome thing to be up here looking down and seeing what it's like.

When we first moved to Albuquerque, we saw that sign that said "Albuquerque next 19 exits." I laughed for I don't know how many miles. I couldn't believe it: 19 exits! Who ever heard of a city with 19 exits? And I still couldn't get a grasp of it until the first time I flew out of Albuquerque. Oh, how interesting it is when the plane takes off and makes its circle and because of the weather patterns it comes around the city and flies over it and you look down and you say: Oh, I'm surprised there are not 30 exits. You see it from a different perspective. Run to Jesus! Run to Jesus!

All we've been talking about for over two years now is having a personal relationship with Him. And I'm telling you, if you're not walking with Him, this is all missing you by a mile. I'm sorry! But if you have an intimate relationship with Jesus today, this is speaking to your heart right now. You know what I'm talking about. You've been in His presence and you've found exactly what the scriptures say He'll be.

God is our captor and our rejoicing

Finally, He is our captor and our rejoicing. And I'll tell you how I got that. "Beyond the Jordan," verse 8, "east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh." Now the word Golan can mean two things. It can mean their exile or their captivity, or it can mean their rejoicing. Some people take it one way, some people take it another. I'm going to take it both ways. In the case of Christ being our refuge, to me He's definitely both.

Isn't it awesome that when the avengers of blood are on our trail, they've heard the story of the one who will not let us up, who will not forgive us. They've heard his side. They've heard his prejudgment of our motive when it's not even what God said and he's gotten them on our trail. Then we immediately are exiled into captivity. When we run to Jesus, He's our captor when we run to Him. Isn't that awesome! I don't know if you caught that or not, but it sure was fun saying it. Sometimes I understand a truth and as I'm saying it I wonder if you're catching what I'm saying. We're driven to Him. We have no other place. We're exiled to Him. Oh, what's happened to me! Oh, glory! This is what I'm looking for. Sometimes when you don't want to go to Him, He runs you to Himself. You're exiled to Him. There's no place else to go. There's nobody that wants to hear our side of the story. Nobody cares. He cares! And when they're on our trail, we're exiled to Him—the very place we need to be. It's in Him we find our rejoicing. He's our captor. He is the one who has come for us. We're chained to His chariot.

But we also find every bit of joy we've ever been looking for right when we get to Him. Isn't that awesome! Run to Jesus! Run to Jesus! Isn't there a song about that? Run to Jesus! Hang on to that! "Oh, brother, Wayne, this is too simple." Well, my friend, thank God He made it simple.

You've been falsely accused. You've tried to explain your side of the story and nobody wants to listen, especially not the person who's been wounded. What do you do? You run to Him! You run to Jesus! And you're going to find everything you're looking for in Him. And He's your High Priest who never dies, so don't leave. Stay there! Practice His presence moment by moment.

When we run to Him, He's our refuge. He is our holy place. He is our strength. I want to say "our" because I'm speaking to you, but I say it to me because I feel conviction. He is "my" holy place. He is "my" strength. He is "my" ally or my friend. He is "my" fortress and "my" treasure. He is "my" high place. He is "my" captor and He is "my" rejoicing. Run to Jesus! Run to Jesus!

In the Old Testament there's a story in 2 Samuel. Asahel was the brother of Joab. Joab was the commander of David's army. Abner, who was a nephew of David, sided with Saul. Saul and David weren't getting along real well. Asahel in a particular battle was being chased, or was actually chasing Abner because of the fact that Abner had gone over to Saul. As he was running, Abner turned around and said, "Don't chase me, I don't want to hurt you. I mean, you're family, I don't want to bother you." He kept running and the guy kept chasing and kept chasing him and finally Abner stopped and had his sword pointed that way, but he just stopped and the back of the sword went through the stomach and out the back of Asahel and he died.

It was unintentional. It was not premeditated. And so Abner did what he should have done, he ran to Hebron, which was a city of refuge and he was safe there. He had a hearing and they understood. He was accepted, but then Joab, the brother of Asahel who had died, decides he's going to be the blood avenger. He goes to the gates of the city and he coaxes Abner out beyond that invisible line where he was safe. He comes out based on, "Hey, man, just wanted to talk to you," and when he got out there, Joab killed him. When they told David about it, David cried out and wailed, "Oh Abner, Abner, you died a fool's death. If you'd stayed inside the city, you could have stayed safe."

Listen, friend, when you run to Jesus, don't run away. Stay there! It's in Him you find what you're looking for. And when the world could care less about your side of the story, and they don't, run to Jesus! He cares! And remember what I said earlier, truth and time will vindicate you. While we're in it we don't know, but in the meantime, you can enjoy the life that you have in Him. Run to Jesus. Run, run to Jesus. The way is clear.

Joshua 22

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Turn with me to Joshua 22. In chapter 21 he divides up the cities for the priests. But that's really not for the tribe of Levi, and then we're moving immediately to chapter 22. Very difficult chapter, and I'm just going to share it the way God put it on my heart. Joshua 22, we're going to talk about blessed are the peacemakers. Well, you wonder where they are sometimes in this world, don't you. Blessed are the peacemakers. Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." And that means the mature ones, the mature sons of God.

In the Christian life, whether we like it or not, we're going to have to deal with relationships. Have you ever said the same thing I've said many times, if it wasn't for people we could live the Christian life. Has that ever come across your mind? If you didn't have to relate to anybody; actually, it's the other way around: If it wasn't for people we probably wouldn't ever live the Christian life. That's what drives us to that very truth.

Last time we saw how we can offend others. I mean, when it's unintentional; it's flesh, yes, we shouldn't have said it, we shouldn't have done it. But we didn't intend to offend anybody, especially for the wound to go as deep as it goes. And we go to the Lord and we ask Him to forgive us. We go to the person; we ask them to forgive us. But we saw that many times they won't do that. In fact, they become like we saw in the Old Testament in chapter 20, the avenger of blood, and they get on our trail. They tell other people, they prejudice our motive.

But what do we do? I mean, we've done everything we've know to do. And we learn we run to Jesus. We run to Him because He is our refuge. He is our safe place. The six cities of refuge that we saw in chapter 20 were basically designed for somebody that has murdered somebody but not with premeditation or hatred at all in his heart. We could almost say it was an accident, but it took somebody's life. And they were well-marked; these cities were well-marked. The roads were well-kept so that access to these cities were always known to everyone. They could run to one of these cities if that happened and they could have refuge there. If their case was heard and the people within decided to keep them and the high priest was still living, they could stay in their city of refuge.

What a beautiful picture this is of the Lord Jesus in our life. All six cities of refuge, when put together draw a beautiful picture of who the Lord Jesus is in our life. He is our refuge. When we foolishly and without premeditation, wound or break our brother—we don't mean to and we've done everything we've known to do—we can run to Him. He's always our refuge whether we intended it to or not, but especially in these situations. Thank God for Christ who is our well-marked place of refuge.

Christ is our holy place. The word Kedesh means holy place. It's a place where we're safe. It's a place where we can run and know that He knows. He's our strength. Shechem means back or shoulder. He holds us up when we've been weakened by somebody's unwillingness to forgive us. He's our ally, our friend. The word Hebron means community, fellowship, alliance. You could even get the word "friendship" there. In Christ we find a friend that sticks closer than a brother. When nobody else cares He does. Christ is our fortress. The word Bezer means fortress or fortification. He is the place of protection. He stands guard over us. And Christ is our high place. The word Ramoth means heights, or high place. It's when we run to Him that we get a better perspective of what's going on.

We can see the whole picture how this is supposed to work for us, not against us. And in Christ He is our captor and our rejoicing. The word Golan means exile or captor, or can mean rejoicing. He's all of that. When we are exiled to Him nobody else cares and so they've run us to Jesus. Well, thank God they got us there. That's where we needed to be to start with. When we get there we find our ability to rejoice once again even when the joy has been drained from us by somebody's unwillingness to forgive.

But isn't it amazing how relationships continue, whether we're in Philippians, whether we're in Judges, whether we're in Galatians, whether we're in Joshua, relationships continue to be the litmus test of whether or not we're walking properly with the Lord Jesus Christ. If we're going to possess the life that God has given to us—Israel had a land, but we have a life—if we're going to possess that life, then we're going to have to deal in relationships. And this is what we're going to be continuing to talk about today.

People, in the economy of God—and this is a tough statement to make, because I have to live it to—people, in the economy of God, are, they're the school that God has designed for us for brokenness. If it wasn't for people we would never be broken. If it wasn't for people we'd never come running to the Lord Jesus who is our refuge. And so people are there for a reason. If we're possessing what is ours in Christ we will be mindful of relationships. And He in us—not us; we're never this way—but Christ in us will be the peacemaker through us. We'll want peace with our brother. We're not going to contend with him. We will seek for peace with our brother.

And today we're going to deal with another problem all of us are going to have to face until the Lord Jesus comes back. To understand our text in chapter 22, it's talking about Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, we have to understand that they willingly chose not to take God's best. They chose to take the land on the east side of the Jordan River as their inheritance rather than the land which God had intended for them on the west side of the Jordan River. And there was a command given them, "You can have this land, but you better go into battle with your brothers." And they did that, but they chose something less than God's best. They thought the land was better for grazing on the east side. If they had just looked over the mountain, if they could have seen over it the land that God had for them was better grazing land than they could ever imagine. The fact has to be remembered that they had done this. If you don't remember that fact, it'll not help your understanding chapter 22.

To illustrate how we relate to it in our covenant today; how do we, when we're seeking to possess the life that God has for us, how do we deal with people who sit beside us in church, who live with us at home and whatever, how do we deal with people who just won't accept God's best for them? Now, they claim to be believers, and yet they sincerely have chosen to rest over here on the wrong side of the Jordan River. And they're going to be with us until Jesus comes back. They love church. They just haven't yet learned how to love Christ. And they're just different. How do we deal with those kinds of people?

Well, in our text today the tribe of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, we're going to learn about how they fought right alongside Israel to help the nine and half tribes possess what God had given to them. But then, when it was all said and done, they wanted no part of it themselves. And so Israel had to deal with itself. The nine and a half tribes had to deal with the two and half tribes. Now, there was an obvious rift between these two groups. It's a silent one, but it's going to come to the surface as we study today, between the nine and half and the two and a half. You could tell that there were two different groups here even though they're supposed to be one as a nation. Two and a half tribes were really not a part of the nine and a half tribes and you'll see that come to the surface. Had these two and a half tribes obeyed God, not only would they have gotten better land to graze their cattle, not only for that, but also they would have helped Israel possess the land that they were having to possess because of the battles.

The Philistines were one of the biggest problems they had over in Israel. And most likely this was the land that God would have given to these two and a half tribes, and so they could have had the whole land subdued had they only listened to God. But no, like many Christians today who want what they want, who have somehow decided that they can live sincerely and not live surrendered to Christ, somehow they figured this all out, and they're camped on the wrong side of the river. Yes, indirectly they're affecting the whole body. Yes, there is a difference between those who want to possess the land or the life and those who do not. But we've still got to live together.

How do we deal with people like this? They want to be considered part of the whole, and they'll show up to help out from time to time, but they will not get serious with God. They will not walk with Him. They'd rather work for Him than they would walk with Him. How do we peacefully deal with these people who are sincere, but sincerely wrong? How do we deal with them in the body of Christ?

We must acknowledge that they are there and move on

One of three things I want to bring out of this, and hopefully it'll encourage your life today and help you to realize that it is under control. God knows what's going on. First of all, we must acknowledge that they are there and move on. We must acknowledge that they're there; we have to be aware that they're there at all times. At the same time, move on. We need to understand that we're not going to change these people. Oh, I wish somebody would have sat me down and preached this message to me about 40 years ago. We're not going to change these people. I mean, yes, we'll pray for them, but only God can change them, just like only God could change Wayne. Only God can change these people.

And the way Joshua treats this two and a half tribes, which obviously set apart from the nine and a half in the fact that they don't want the land that God had given to them, gives us an example of how we need to live and exist with them until Jesus comes back. In verses 1-6 of chapter 22 it's a beautiful example. He says in verse 1, "Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh." Now Joshua, the first thing he does, he thanks them for their participation. They showed up. They did what they were told to do so that they could have that land on the east side of the river. Verse 2: "And said to them, 'You have kept all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord, your God.'"

So he thanks them for their participation. He's appreciative of the fact that they went into battle with them and then he graciously sends them to live where they have chosen to live. Verse 4: "And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brothers as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you beyond the Jordan." Now remember Moses gave them the land. God didn't. God had land over in Canaan but they wouldn't take that. And then in verse 5, "Only be careful to observe the commandment of the Law which Moses, the servant of the Lord commanded you to love the Lord your God, and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all of your soul." Man that's quite a challenge there.

And then he says in verse 6, "So Joshua blessed them and sent them away and they went to their tents." They went back to where they really wanted to live. They didn't want to be with the nine and a half tribes, possessing that which God had given to them. Oh, no, they found something they thought was better for them. They took less than what God's best was in their life. There will always be those who'll do this. They'll show up, they'll sit beside us in church, they'll be wherever we are. And you'll have one who wants to possess the life that Christ has given to them, and you'll have one right beside him that's a sincere person. And do they love the Lord Jesus? They'd tell you they did. But they will not get right with God. They will not walk with God. And they do some strange things in the body of Christ.

So what do we do? Like Joshua we wish them well and we move on with our lives. We can't change what they've chosen to do. So often we let the people, the two and a half tribes, capture our focus. It occupies our focus and our attention and we forget about the nine and a half tribes that are wanting to possess what God has for them. We let the tail wag the dog. And I'm speaking to myself as much as I am to anybody else this morning. I tell you the truth, this chapter has tremendously encouraged my heart. And what God just told me was, "Listen, be appreciative of the fact that they at least showed up to help. Wayne, you can't make decisions for other people."

If you've had children you know what I'm talking about. Haven't there been times in your raising your children that you wanted to take the truth that you're trying to teach them and cram it down their ear and just take a plunger and make sure it gets in their head? And you just can't do that. You can't do that. They're going to make their own choices. If they choose not to walk in the life God has given to them so be it, but go on and walk in the life that God has given to you. Don't let them take away from you the focus of Jesus in your life. Thank God for them. "Hey, I'm glad you showed up. Now listen I'm going on to what God's told me. I wish you well. And let me tell you how to live, but that's, you're not going to be my focus any longer. I'm going to focus on the nine and a half tribes that want to inherit that which God has."

You know, it's amazing when you think about those who don't want to possess the life versus those who do want to possess the life. How do you know the difference? I mean, it's not as bad as you think it is. I found something that somebody sent to me, and I'm loving the emails that you're sending to me, the funny ones, okay. Listen at this. A mother enters her daughter's bedroom and sees a letter over the bed. With the worst premonition she reads it with trembling hands. "Dear Mom, it's with great regret and sorrow that I'm telling you that I have eloped with my new boyfriend. I have found real passion. And he's so nice even with all of his piercings and tattoos. And I love riding on the back of his big motorcycle. But it's not only that, mom. I'm pregnant and Bubba said that we will be very happy in his trailer in the woods. He wants to have many more children with me and that's one of my dreams. I've learned that marijuana doesn't hurt anyone and I'll be growing it for us and his friends who are providing for us all the cocaine and ecstasy we want. In the mean time we pray for science to find the AIDS cure for Bubba to get better. He deserves it. Don't worry, mom, I'm 15 years old now and I know how to take care of myself. Someday I'll visit you so you can get to know your grandchildren. Your daughter, Judith." And then there was a P.S. "Mom, it's not true. I'm next door at Sandy's. I just wanted you to show you that there are worse things in life than my report card that's on your desk. I love you!"

That's classic. That is classic. Hey, it could be worse! You know, at least you've got people showing up and acting sincere. Just because they won't get a clue don't let that bother you. Wish them well. Acknowledge that they're there and move on with your life. Don't let two and a half tribes take away from you the joy of the nine and a half that are seeking to possess what God has given to them. And that was good advice. I think it's good advice for me. Joshua understood it.

We can't allow their flesh to provoke ours

But secondly, we can't allow their flesh to provoke ours. Two and a half tribes did a very unthinkable thing. They built an altar on the west side of the Jordan River. Now remember, the land that they had chosen was on the east side. When you get over to the west side, that's territory belonging to the nine and a half tribes that they have chosen not to possess. They built an altar on the west side. Joshua 22:10, "When they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a large altar in appearance." Now it's one thing to build an altar. That's bad enough. That's, you're going to see in a moment, that's heresy because of something, and I'll tell you. But to build it on the west side when your property is on the east side is unthinkable. It's unthinkable.

And it was nothing small. It was something that was large. People would notice. It wasn't something that could just be put aside and nobody would figure it out. It says, "A large altar in appearance." It was a huge altar. It would have been visible from quite a distance. In fact, verse 28 says it was "a copy of the altar of the Lord," speaking of that which was at the tabernacle at Shiloh. These two and a half tribes who won't possess what is theirs are wanting to make their presence known. And they're acting as if they have no sense at all, and they don't even understand what they're doing.

It's just like that in the body of Christ. Those who won't possess what God has given to them will do some ignorant things along the way. What they worship and how they worship will make no sense, but it will attract our attention. It will get our attention. They'll put altars in some strange places and they will not be small. They'll be big enough that it'll catch your attention.

Now building this altar, as I said, was an act of heresy to the tribes on the western side. Why? Because in chapter 18 it says they moved the tabernacle to Shiloh. Shiloh became the center of worship. And there can be no other altars given and erected, because this altar that was their tabernacle was for worship. The altar was where you put the animal the brazen sacrifice, then they had the laver, then they had the tent of meeting. And this was very special. They actually took the dimensions of that same altar and built it over by the Jordan River on the eastern side. What are they doing? And I'm telling you, people who won't possess what is theirs in Christ have no discernment in what worship is all about to begin with. They do strange things. They attach themselves to strange altars.

So in Joshua 22:11, "And the sons of Israel heard it said, 'Behold, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan in the region of the Jordan on the side belonging to the sons of Israel.'" Now watch out. Remember I told you there was already a rift that was beginning to develop there in the beginning and it comes out right here; the fact that they were separate in mind at least. They called themselves the sons of Israel. Now wait a minute; there were 12 sons of Israel. And the nine and a half tribes called themselves the sons of Israel; and secondly in verse 12 they're called "the whole of Israel." "When the sons of Israel heard it, the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves at Shiloh to go up against them in war."

Now that just caught me by surprise. Nine and a half tribes calling themselves the sons of Israel, and calling themselves the whole of the nation of Israel. It seems to me we already see how they disenfranchised themselves from this two and a half tribes. And that's not good. Well now they're preparing to make war with them. Isn't that, that's amazing to me. It says that they gathered themselves in Shiloh to go up against them in war. You know, one of the things that's hit me, and hopefully it's hit you as we study Joshua, is how quickly they are to kill each other. I mean, you don't like what I like, boom, I'll take you out. And here they are the whole congregation said what? "'They've built an altar. Let's go kill them.' And they gather for war at Shiloh."

How quickly we do that in the body of Christ. We wound people and then we shoot our wounded. I mean, it's incredible. And many times what we don't understand is these people that we're shooting don't have a clue they're not willing to go on say yes to Christ. Sincerely in their hearts they'd tell you in a minute that they love Jesus. They exist among us. They're everywhere in the body of Christ. We don't shoot them. That's not the answer. We immediately stoop to their level. And that's what we've got to be careful about. You never let the ignorance of another, in their own flesh, provoke our flesh. You cannot do that. We still have those who choose to do the very same thing. We've got to be very careful about it.

They will not possess what God has given to them and they conspicuously, very conspicuously build a large altar. But the point is, instead of acknowledging them and moving on, and at this particular point confronting them in the right way, the people wanted to kill them.

From time to time I've made the mistake of trying to shoot down people's altars that they had built. And I'll be honest with you, I admit that from time to time it still comes back on me. When you see it just come up and say, "Wayne, bless your heart. I'm praying for you. You're doing it again." My wife used to say when we'd get in the car and I'd be real tender about a certain point, something maybe I've had a battle in my life and I've never seen the victory in it. And we'd get in the car and she would say, "Well, you're still struggling aren't you. You haven't got the victory in that one, have you?" There are a lot of people doing a lot of crazy things today and calling it worship, building altars in strange places and for whatever reason I felt like it was my responsibility to go out and nail every one of them. And finally, I'm just realizing it.

Now this Scripture so encouraged my heart. If it's not speaking to anybody else out there, it's spoken to me, and that is, "Wayne, son, go on and do what you know to do and don't kill your brother. Just because he's ignorant, just because he's off here in left field, don't shoot him down. Don't shoot him down." We must not let other's flesh provoke ours. Well, when we do that we cease to be the peacemakers God wants us to be. God desires for you and I to be a peace maker. "Well Wayne, my goodness, you don't understand what this person..."

And if it's outright sin, and it's deliberate, then the next point will help you. It needs to be confronted. But we've got to remember that many of these people are believers and they're weaker brothers. We see that all through scripture where the strong helps the weak. We've got to remember that. We don't shoot our wounded. We continue to move on and possess what God's given us, but don't let their flesh provoke ours. Roy Hession used to tell me all the time, "Son, always be the wrong one." I said, "Yeah, explain that one to me; because they did something to me. I didn't do anything to them." He said, "Yeah, but how are you responding to it?" Oops! Not so good, brother Roy. So, in other words, you've already stooped to their level by your response, no matter what they did to you. We have to be very careful not to let the flesh of another provoke our flesh. And I'll tell you what, it's a constant battle in every one of our lives.

When confrontation is necessary, it must be done by the most spiritual

'Thirdly, and here comes the third point, because this does happen and this was very necessary here. When confrontation is necessary, and it is here, then it must be done by the most spiritual. Why? Because the spiritual man is a man of peace; a fleshly man is a man of war. You go back and study Galatians 5:20 and the first word in 21, and it talks about the relationship words that are there. Go back and study them. Every one of them are competitive: I have got to win so therefore when I confront my brother it will be for the point of winning over him, not making peace and finding out how we can solve this situation God's way.

Israel had every right to confront what the two and a half tribes had done. If they were going to build another altar to worship another god, and that's the assumption, I mean, how could you look at it any different? Then that was sin and that would affect the whole of Israel. So Israel sends a delegation, not the warring, not everybody that wants to go kill them, they take their most spiritual men to confront these tribes. I thought about the New Testament admonition of that and fulfillment of that. It says in Galatians 6:1 "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in a trespass you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each one looking to yourself so that you too will not be tempted." That's exactly what we're seeing here. Because if a person's not walking possessing the life that God has given him and he sees sin and he sees error, he will absolutely assault that person with no love whatsoever and no peace in mind at all.

So they send the spiritual delegation. Verses 13-14, "Phinehas, who is the son of Eleazar the priest, and ten chiefs." By that he means the spiritual leaders of the households, the ten tribes. You say, "Wayne, there's nine and a half." I know that. But that half tribe of Manasseh counts as a tribe and so that makes 10. And they send the spiritual delegation to find out what in the world are you doing now? Building an altar of all things, and building it on our side. So they send these spiritual men. Most likely Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the priest is probably the one who does the speaking. And he's going to remind them of two previous times in Israel's history that idolatry and sin caused a problem to all of the nation of Israel.

And the first time he reminds them of is during Moses' day. In Joshua 22:16, "Thus says the whole congregation of the Lord, 'What is this unfaithful act which you have committed against the God of Israel, turning away from following the Lord this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the Lord this day? Is not the iniquity of Peor enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, although a plague came on the congregation of the Lord, that you must turn away this day from following the Lord.'" As if that's what they're doing. "If you rebel against the Lord today He'll be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow."

Now what he does he refers to a time when Israel worshiped the god of Baal at the Mt. Peor in Numbers 25. And it was such a heinous thing that God caused a plague to fall upon the Israelite and 24,000 people died as a result of it. Phinehas recalls this probably because he was there. An Israelite brought a Midionite woman to his tent. Now this is blatant. This is right in front of Moses, took him, took this woman into his tent and proceeded to have an illicit relationship with her, right there with Moses standing there. And Phinehas took a spear and ran into the tent and threw the spear right as they were in the act, threw the spear right through both of them and killed them. Well, the moment he did that the plague ended and that's what Phinehas brings back to their remembrance.

Numbers 25:7, "When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation, took a spear in his hand, and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through the body, so the plague on the sons of Israel was checked." And Phinehas was there and Phinehas brings this up and he says, "Listen, Israel has learned that sin in the camp doesn't just affect one, it affects everybody; 24,000 died because of sins of many that happened in that time." He says, "If you rebel against the Lord today, He will be angry with the congregation of Israel tomorrow." Don't you know that?

Well, Phinehas assumes that since they have built the altar on the west side, evidently this is idolatry and evidently they're thinking that their land is unclean and they want this altar on the other side of the river. So he offers a peaceful suggestion, which is good. He says, "If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the Lord where the Lord's tabernacle stands, and take possession among us." In other words, if you think your land is unclean and you can't build your altar over there, then at least come on over here and possess the land you have and worship where we worship, "Only do not rebel against the Lord or rebel against us, by building an altar for yourselves, beside the altar of the Lord our God."

Now that needs to be confronted. When somebody has built an altar to themselves instead of the altar of the Lord, the place of worship; when somebody has exchanged God and the worship of Him for something else; that needs to be confronted in the body of Christ. But the spiritual men are the ones to do it.

The second illustration was not too far removed from their own experience. In verse 20 he says, "Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity." You know, bottom line, what he's saying is, "Guys, do you understand if you're building this altar over here and you have any thought of using that, do you understand it's going to bring all kinds of consequences on the whole nation of Israel?" The case against these two and a half tribes, as far as they could see, and even these spiritual men could see, was airtight. I mean, after all, look what you've done. And so they confronted them in a peaceful manner.

But how surprised they were to hear the answer of why the altar was built. This shouldn't surprise us. I'm telling you, people who won't possess what God has given to them come up with all kinds of things they think are okay, which is absolutely ignorant. Their answer just shows us that when people are that way they may be sincere, but sincerely wrong. Verse 21: "Then the sons of Reuben and the son of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered and spoke to the heads of the families of Israel. 'The Mighty One, God, the Lord! He knows, and may Israel itself know. If it was in rebellion, or if in an unfaithful act against the Lord do not save us today!'" That was not our heart. That's not why we built it. "If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the Lord or to offer a burnt offering, a grain offering on it, or if to offer sacrifices of peace offerings on it, may the Lord Himself require it." If that's what He wants us to do with it.

"But truly we have done this out of concern." Now this is interesting, misguided, but it's still real. "For a reason, saying, 'In time to come your sons may say to your sons, to our sons, 'What have you to do with the Lord, the God of Israel?'" They're scared to death that because of that division of the Jordan River that they're not going to be included over here. Good reason! "For the Lord has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; you have no portion in the Lord." That's what he's thinking these sons would say to their sons. "So your sons may not, may make our sons stop fearing the Lord." In other words, there's going to be huge contention between the families of the next generation.

Well, he said, "Therefore we said, 'Let us build an altar, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice.'" That just really grabs me. We're just going to build an altar. We're not going to worship on it. We just want to be remembered. We want to keep our name on the roll, even though we never give and hardly ever come. We just want to make sure our children don't suffer from where we have been.

And then it's interesting. They said the Lord made a dividing line with the Jordan River. No, the Lord did not. They made the dividing line by not going over and taking what God had given them. Verse 27: "Rather it shall be a witness between us and you and between our generations after us, that we are to perform the service of the Lord before Him with our burnt offerings and with our sacrifices and with our peace offering," it's a reminder, "so that your sons will not say to our sons in times to come, 'You have no portion in the Lord.' Therefore, we said, 'It shall also come about if they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, then we shall say, 'See the copy of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice; rather it is a witness between us and you.''"

And what they were saying, I don't care how sincere that you can come up with, it was totally idealistic. Do you know what book follows the book of Joshua? The book of Judges, right? What happened in the book of Judges? This is the next generation. I mean, come on, folks. But they're sincere. They are sincere. And they're being dealt with by spiritual men who have peace in their heart. Well, it what they were doing bordered blasphemy, but they were sincere to think that this altar would never be used or desecrate. Come on. But people who will not possess what God has given to them don't make a lot of sense to start with and they do put altars in strange places, but they're sincere. That's interesting to me.

Can you change it? No, verse 29: "Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord and turn away from following the Lord this day, by building an altar for burnt offering, for grain offering or for sacrifice, besides the altar of the Lord our God which is before His tabernacle." Man, if they really had wanted to be remembered, why in the world didn't they pack up, cross the Jordan and get on over to the land which God had given them? If you want to be remembered, that's the way you remember. But you see, there's other ways that they've come up with because they're not about. They're not about to possess what God says is theirs. And that's a sad story of what goes on in Christianity even today. Now no possible way, there's no sermon I could preach and there's nothing we

could do to convince anybody to do it. God has to work on that heart. You can't change it.

Since peace is the motive of spiritual men, Phinehas accepted their answer. That was gracious of him, as to why the altar was built. If they were planning on a sacrifice, man, they would have been nailed right there, but they evidently were very honest and very sincere. So in verse 30, "So when Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the congregation, even the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them." And go down to the last verse in verse 34: "The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad called the altar Witness." It's going to be a witness "for they said, 'It's a witness between us that the Lord is God.'"

We don't have to kill those who don't have a clue. We don't certainly shouldn't focus upon them, but we just simply go on. We move on and possess the land God has given us even though we know they're going to be in the crowd all the way along. Not a thing in the world you and I can do. God'll have to do it. We must acknowledge those who will not possess what God has given them and move on. We must not allow their flesh to drag us down to their level to provoke our flesh. And if we must confront—and some things like this one had to be confronted, because it was altar of worship they thought. They were satisfied that the people weren't going to use it for that, but just wanted to be remembered—if we must confront, only the spiritual must do the confronting because they're the only ones that'll have the discernment to know how to handle the situation.

You know, many times I've preached a message and I tell people I preach to myself and hope you got something out of it. I hope you'll forgive me for preaching to myself one more time today. I have to deal with that all the time and you do too. Family, I don't care, it's at church, it's everywhere. And you just want to grab somebody and shake them and say, "Do you realize the very thing you're running from is the very thing you need?" But they don't hear you. They don't hear you. They come out of a different mindset, but they're going to exist with us till Jesus comes back.

Joshua 23

Living by faith

Turn with me if you will to Joshua 23. We are about to finish this great book. We're going to talk today about living by faith. How appropriate. It says in Galatians 5:1, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free." But we also learned in chapter 2, the only way to appropriate that freedom is to walk and live by faith. That's what we're going to talk about today, living by faith so that we can walk in the freedom that God has given us in Christ Jesus.

When it comes to the Christian life we do have a choice to make. We either trust God or we trust man and his ways and his wisdom. In other words, we could say it this way: faith or flesh, faith or flesh. There is no middle ground. I'm either walking after the flesh or I'm walking by faith, trusting God and trusting His word. You say, "Well, Wayne, that really can't happen to Christians. We don't have really that much choice, do we? Oh yes we do. As a matter of fact, the example to that is the Corinthian church. They faced the same dilemma. They had a choice. Do it your way, do it God's way. Walk by faith, walk after the flesh. And they chose to walk after the flesh. They failed that test miserably. They would rather do it man's way. They'd rather cling to man's wisdom than to God's Word and His wisdom.

So the apostle Paul had to write, because it caused all kinds of problems within the church, and he had to write the epistle of 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 1:11, he says, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you." Now we think of the word "quarrel" as something that happened in the car on the way to church. "You didn't turn the water off." "You didn't turn the iron off." That's not a quarrel. The word here is the word that means something that's extremely hostile, that's dividing the church of Corinth. And he says in verse 12, as he identifies the root of where all this comes from, and he says, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I'm of Paul,' and 'I'm of Apollos,' and 'I'm of Cephas.'"

See what they've done? Instead of attaching themselves to Christ they've attached themselves to preachers. Apollos was the second preacher of the church there. Paul was the first one. And Cephas, of course, was the Aramaic name for Simon Peter, the unsung hero of Christianity at that time. They even had one group that says "Well, we're of Christ." They were the worst ones. They didn't think that anybody else was there except them, and so it was a terrible dilemma.

In chapter 3 the apostle Paul shows that being followers of men and being followers of their wisdom is very divisive, but it's also very immature. And he says to them in verse 1 of chapter 3, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food." Now he talks about back when they first became believers. They hadn't quite caught it yet. They knew Christ was in their life, but they were babes, and that's okay. But then comes the indictment. "Indeed," he says, "even now you are not yet able." A similar thing he says in Hebrews, or whoever wrote Hebrews says, "that you should be teachers, but you need to be taught again." He said, "You're not even able now." And then he says in verse 3, "For you are still fleshly; for since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly? Are you not willing on walking like

mere men?"

And then he points to the root one more time in 1 Corinthians 3:4, he says, "For when one says 'I'm of Paul,' and another 'I'm of Apollos,' are you not mere men?" Isn't that the way we are? We either attach ourselves to God or more than likely we'll attach ourselves to a person, to flesh and blood. We'll attach ourselves to our own flesh and our flesh wants and how it wants to walk.

You say, "Well, Wayne, that's fine and I appreciate you telling me all of that, of faith and flesh and I understand that, but what's that got to do with Joshua? I'm so glad you asked that question. In our study today we're going to find out that Joshua is passing off of the scene. He's about to die, and he understands that. And you see, what he wants to tell them is, "Even though I've been your leader, you don't need me; you need Him." He'd been their leader for years there and taken them through battle after battle after battle as they've come into the land. But now he's about to leave the scene. In fact, the final two chapters of Joshua, chapters 23 and 24 are the last two speeches he gives to the people.

Some people say that it's the same speech written a different way in chapter 24. But if you'll study it carefully there are too many significant differences to be one. It has to be two different speeches. Once the land had been divided—and by the way, it's not chronological right here in chapter 23; it probably goes back to when he said that you're now old and God told him to divide the land—and once he had divided the land, Joshua took what had been given to him, moved up in the mountains of Ephraim and wanted to live out his days.

But in our text he knows that his time is short. He knows he's not going to be there as their leader anymore, so he calls all the leadership of Israel together, not the whole, all the tribes, but the leadership of the tribes together. One more time he wants to warn them, first of all, about apostasy, about idolatry and going after pagan gods. But then secondly, he wants to challenge them to trust God and to trust His word and to learn to live by faith, to walk in the victory so that they can claim the land that God says was theirs. Bottom line again, what he was telling them is, "Guys, you don't need me; you need Him, and that's the one I'm putting your focus back upon. I'm leaving the scene. I want you to focus upon Him."

Verse 1 of chapter 23, "Now it came about after many days, when the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years, that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers, and said to them, 'I am old, advanced in years. And you have seen all the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord your God is He who has been fighting for you.'" And what he does here, he reminds them that even though, yes, I led you, it was really God that was fighting for you all along. It never was your leader. That's not the key. God's not a respecter of people. He's a respecter of faith. So it was He that was fighting for you all along. It was God who won the battles and had given them the land.

Well, Joshua wants them to know that God is all that they needed, He's all that they need. In verse 4, "See, I have apportioned to you these nations which remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off, from the Jordan even to the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun." But then he says, hey, that's all I did. Let me show you something else, verse 5. "The Lord, your God, He will thrust them out from before you and drive them from before you; and you will possess their land, just as the Lord your God has promised you." Israel had learned from experience to trust God. They knew what would happen if they didn't trust God. They knew the defeat. They knew it Ai. They knew it when they made the wrong covenant with the Gibeonites. They had made some serious errors, so they knew that when you walk by faith, saying yes to God, that's when you walk in the victory that He has. Faith is the only thing that unlocks the power of God in a person's life. Israel knew this by experience.

You know, we could put it in our context in the new covenant in which we live. We know this by experience. I was watching a video a while ago when we started the service about Duane Blue. Duane knows this by experience. Duane was a member of the Hell's Angels, lived in a bus, couldn't read or write, and God saved him. Iris, his wife was in prison for all those years and she said, "I knelt down as a tramp and I stood up as a lady." See, all of us in here that are born again, that we've been saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we know the power of God. And we know what faith will do. We know that the times we've walked through the valleys in life that God has got a hold of us and when we said yes to Him we've walked in that marvelous victory that only He can give. And so what Joshua's doing is what we ought to do today. We ought to go back and rehearse the power of God in our life. And when we have walked in it, has been when we've been willing to walk and live by faith.

Well, today, by looking at Joshua's speech at the end of his life, we want to see what walking by faith really looks like. You say, "Wayne, I want to walk in the power of God. What does it look like when you walk by faith? Can you help me?" Well, let's look at Israel and learn from them. Remember 1 Corinthians 10:6 says, that all these things happen to Israel for our example. So let's look at them again and let's just see what Joshua says to them and hear what God is saying to our hearts this morning. Remember Hebrews 11 says, "without faith it is impossible to please God." Perhaps this will help us to understand we cannot attach ourselves to men and to our own ways and to our flesh. We must attach ourselves to Christ. And as we glue ourselves to Him, as we attach ourselves to Him, then and only then do we possess what God says is already ours.

The activity of faith

Three things that I want you to see this morning from the text. First of all, the activity of faith. You say, Wayne, what is the activity of faith? Biblical faith clings to God and to His Word. And you see, you're going to say, "Well, Wayne, what does faith do?" It clings to God and to His word. If you'll jump down to verse 8 he gives you the key and then you back up and see how he got, he gets there. In verse 8 he says, "But you are to cling to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day." And I love that word "cling." The word "cling" is the word *dabaq* in Hebrew. It means to glue yourself to. That real strong glue that people sell and you put it on and it just adheres comes to my mind. It's to glue yourself to. It's to stick close to. It's to cleave to. Real faith glues itself to God and to His word.

You see, it's God's word that jumpstarts our faith. Anybody who says they love God has to love His Word, because that's what God is saying. That's how we know His will. If you love somebody and you want to serve somebody you need to know what his will is, and so you glue yourself to God and you glue yourself to His word. Romans 10:17 says that "faith comes from hearing and hearing from [what?] the word of God." So that's what jumpstarts our faith. So real faith glues itself to God and to His word.

Verses 6-7 show us why this is so important and why he builds to this point. He says in verse 6, "Be very firm then to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left." Now, when he says "be very firm," the Hebrew idea is to prevail against something. It automatically anticipates an enemy, an adversary; to stand strong in the face of something. Now you say, well, against what? What am I to prevail against? I mean, what's he talking about? And here's his point, and you'll see it in a minute in verse 7; against a temptation to abandon our faith, now listen carefully, and to embrace idolatry. Idolatry is nothing more than the opposite of faith.

Now understand what I'm saying. If we're not walking by faith we're living in idolatry. There is no middle ground. And he says, listen, if you want to stay away from that, glue yourself to God and glue yourself to His Word. That'll keep you safe. That'll keep your focus. That'll establish the boundaries in your life. Remember that idolatry is nothing more than religion that's made by man. It was made by man. It was based on his wisdom and it was meant to satisfy man.

So interesting, I have a friend of mine that's in the music area over in Texas and he was telling me recently, he said that they were having quite a bit of trouble over music. And he said this certain man says, "I don't like the songs. I don't like the music. I don't like what you're doing." And my friend had the wisdom from God to tell him, he said, "Sir, I am so sorry. Can I ask your forgiveness?" And the man liked that and he says yes. And he said, "But for what?" He said, "Somehow in what I've written, somehow by what I said, I have communicated to you that the music was for you instead of God, and I am so, so very sorry."

Idolatry is anything that takes away from the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's when we choose to walk after the flesh instead of walk in the Spirit of God. And idolatry can take a thousand forms, and I just gave you one of them. Idolatry lurks on all sides. So Joshua says, "Don't turn aside from God's word to the right hand or to the left." Cling to the Lord and to His word. Glue yourself to Him and to His word.

And then verse 7 brings it out very clearly, "So that you will not associate with these nations, these which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them." See, his whole point is idolatry. And, he says, the word "associate" means exactly that. Don't intermarry with them. Don't recognize their gods. Don't even mention them he said. And certainly, by all means, don't bow down to them.

You say, "Now, Wayne, how does this help me? I'm in the new covenant. How does this speak to my heart?" Well, for us it would be a warning, to be in the world but not of the world. You see, a boat in the water is by design, but water in the boat is absolute disaster. You see, our flesh gravitates towards the world and the way it does things and the way it thinks and its wisdom and its works. But what Joshua tells them is, "I'm going to be off the scene, but I'll tell you how you can be safe and secure." He says, "Glue yourself to God. Glue yourself to His word. Be strong. Be firm. Walk in the freedom that only He can give to you. Possess the land that He has already given to you."

The temptation for you and for me it lurks on every side. It comes in a thousand different forms, for us to walk away from walking by faith, to choosing to walking after the flesh. The attitude of faith is to cling to God and to His word. The consequences of not doing that is to fall into the trap of idolatry. To put our faith in man and in his wisdom, literally—now I'm going to say this—but it literally makes no sense whatsoever to the believer. It makes no sense. To sit in a committee meeting and to apply the principles of the world to something when you haven't heard from God makes no sense. To sit in a family and to make decisions not based on what God says and what His Word is trying to get across to us makes no sense whatsoever. We're like the children of Israel. We've already learned many lessons and those lessons have been that God is faithful, and if we will glue ourselves to Him and glue ourselves to His word then we don't have to worry about idolatry ever falling into our life. We can continue to walk by faith.

One of England's most enduring legends involves the Danish King Cnut. I now know where he's from. He ruled Britain from 1016-1035. He was such an imposing and successful king that never-ending praise was rendered to him. His courtiers were afraid to mutter anything to him but flatteries. And Cnut grew tired of it. And one day in the year 1032, taking them to the coast in North

Hampton, he placed his throne in the sand as the tide was coming in. Now he sits down on his throne and the tide's coming in. As his advisors stood around he asked them, "Do you think I'm the mightiest of the mighty?" "Oh yes, your majesty," they replied. "Do you think I can stop the tide?" "Oh yes, your majesty," they again replied, only this time a little more doubtfully.

Looking at the ocean breakers he said, "Oh sea, stay, come no further. I, Cnut, ruler of the universe, command you." But despite his commands the tide rolled in until it was lapping at the feet of the men. It came to their knees. Then, as the waves engulfed them, the king and all of his men ran for safety. "You see", said Cnut, "how little I am obeyed. There is only one Lord over land and water, the Lord of the universe. It is to Him and to Him alone you should offer your praise." Slowly the king and his courtiers walked back into town where at the cathedral King Cnut, the mightiest of them all, took his crown off and hung it in the church.

He had more sense than many believers do today. You see, there is no god but our God. There is no king but our King. And if we adhere ourselves to Him, if we glue ourselves to Him and to His word, we're safe, we're secure. We can walk through this life and we can be protected. We can possess the life that God has given to us. But if we choose to do it our way we're idolaters, and at that point He is not being glorified in our life; flesh is being glorified, man is being glorified. And it's almost as if our worship in heaven is silent. They can't hear us because the heart has been ripped out. Real faith knows the fallacy of trusting man. It knows to cling to God and to His word. Then why does it do that? That's the activity of faith.

The attitude of faith

Well, it's built upon the attitude of faith. This is like a backwards three verses. It's like you're starting at the end and working backward. Secondly, the attitude of faith. This is the key. The attitude of real faith, it has the activity of clinging to God and clinging to His word is a deep love for God and for His word. In Joshua 23:11 it says, "So take diligent heed to yourselves," and I love this, "to love the Lord your God." Now the word "love" is the word that we are familiar with in the English, but its definitions are deeper than what we give it. In the Old Testament it describes the hunger one has for something.

You know, when I first came here I remember you all took me out to a Mexican restaurant. Was I ever in for a surprise. You know, I found out real quickly that in New Mexico the word "mild" means nothing. The first thing they did was do you want red or do you want green? Want red or green what? They said chili. And I said, well, let me try the green, but make it mild. And I thought I noticed a grin on that waitress. You know, sure enough I've never eaten sour cream in my life, and I started eating it just to keep the blisters off the roof of my mouth while I'm eating the "mild" green chili.

But, you know, that was over two years ago, and do you realize now I actually have a hunger for it? I went to get a hamburger the other day. People back in the south, they give you a jalapeño and say that's hot. I say, oh no, y'all, that's not hot. Come on out, come on down." I love it. I just got a hamburger and I said, "Do you have any green chili?" That's kind of like duh! You know, everybody's got green chili. Put that green chili on it and, oh man, there's a hunger now that's been established. Why? Because I've tasted of something and because I've learned now to love it and understand what it does.

Love the Lord your God. Have you tasted of Him? Are you saved this morning? Have you walked in His fullness and have you walked in His grace? It develops a hunger and it's not something you really have to do, it's a consequence. You're just simply focused on Him and this is what is birthed out of that. You're going to love Him. You're going to love Him! It's used of lovers and the desire they have to be with one another. What a beautiful picture that is. They just can't spend enough time in each other's presence. And it's used of hunger like for food and you can't enough of something.

When true faith is present it is evident in the one who loves God and desires to be in His presence and has a hunger for His word. No wonder he glues himself to God. No wonder he glues himself to His word. There's a love here. This is all birthed out a love for who He is. If you think about it, since we've tasted of Him, why shouldn't we, why wouldn't we love Him?

Joshua reminds them of why they ought to love Him. He says in verse 9, "For the Lord has driven out great and strong nations from before you. And as for you, no man stood before you to this day." God had driven out their strongest enemy. Now let me ask you a question. Did you ever struggle with alcoholism? Did you ever struggle with drugs? Did you ever struggle with lust, or whatever and God, when you came before Him, replaced you and drove out your strongest enemy? No wonder you love Him. It's like the disciples said, "Oh Lord, if we leave You where are we going to go?" And so he's just building his case. What has God done in your life this morning that's caused you to love Him, that makes you want to glue yourself to Him, that makes you want to glue yourself to His word?

God has chosen to use him in a powerful way. Now this is the most exciting thing. Did Israel deserve to be used? Are you kidding? Do we deserve to be used? Absolutely not. But in Joshua 23:10 he says, "One of your men puts to flight a thousand." Why? "For the Lord your God it is He who fights for you just as He promised you." Take one of you, any one of you and let him be filled up with what God wants to do. Glue yourself to Him and a thousand people will run from him because it's God in him, fighting for him. And that's why Joshua's saying, that's where you want to be. You don't need me. Don't attach yourself to me. Attach yourself to Him. You know, it just doesn't take long to love God when you've trusted Him and seen His faithfulness in your life.

I was listening to Moody radio one day and there was a program that came on and said let's do a God watch. I thought a what? And they said why don't you just write down every way in which you see God working in your life for a certain day. Do it for 30 days. I didn't tell anybody. I just too unconsciously doing that. I did it during the day I just started watching for Him. It almost became a reflex for me. And the most precious thing dawned on me. God is all around me. God lives in me. God is moving and speaking and working and loving me in a thousand different ways, and I had been living not focused on Him. And when you cling yourself to Him and when you see Him work in your life it just makes you want to love Him like never before and cling to Him. That's what faith is. Faith is not something you go out and do. Faith is something that He births within you and then out of that comes your love for God and this is what it's all about. It's life, it's a relationship. It's not a religion.

He says, "So take diligent heed," verse 11 says, "to yourselves to love the Lord your God." The word "Lord" is an awesome word. It's the word Jehovah. As a matter of fact, the Israelites wouldn't even say it in a full word. It was a whisper. It was so sacred, so precious to them because they had experienced Him, that they didn't even want to say it in any way that would bring shame to it. They wanted this name to be so important. The word Jehovah means I am; He's the self-existent One. He's the unchanging eternal One. And He's the I AM, the I AM. A lady came to a preacher once and asked him, He is what? That doesn't help me. The I AM what? The preacher very wisely said why don't you fill in the blank? Because whatever you need He is, that's who He is. That's the word "Lord." Just fill in the blank. He is the God who is the answer to every dilemma we have in life. He is the God who says, "Come to Me, Wayne and fill in the blank. If it's in a spiritual realm of your life fill in the blank. I AM that I AM."

And then the word "God," why would he put the Lord God? The word "God" is the word Elohim. Elohim is the plural form of that word, "God." You say, oh, is there more than one God? No! He's speaking of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The word used over in Genesis. In other words, in all of His aspects, God the Father who determines the effects in our life, God the Son who gives us the ministry in our life, God the Holy Spirit who gives us the gifts in our life. God, the Lord God, love the Lord your God! This is his whole point. There is no other God.

Where you going to go? If you're not going to walk by faith do you see how foolish it is not to walk by faith? Where you going to go? There is no other God. Elohim, Jehovah is to be worshiped, is to be loved. Out of that will flow a clinging to Him and a clinging to His word. That was Joshua's whole point. You don't need me, folks. You don't need me, Joshua says, you have what you need. Now walk with Him. Glue yourself to Him. Love Him.

Well, sin again is idolatry. All of us have been there. We've all done it. Israel had done it. Doing things our way is idolatry. And so, in the face of that, God says, "Now, is that what you want?" No, through Joshua He says, "You love Me, you cling to Me and cling to My word." So the activity of faith is a clinging to God, but that is totally based on the attitude of faith which is a loving God. And you will only have to be in His presence, you will only have to experience Him as He works in your life to come to that place.

A dear, dear man, this past week that I just fell in love with when I met him, said to me, "I'm a recovering alcoholic and I thank God for it every day. It's a gift He gave to me." And then he said, "Because that is what it took to drive me to where I should have been to start with. And to drive me into a relationship with Him, it is moment by moment by moment." Nicholas Herman, 1611-1691, was a Carmelite mystic born in France, converted at the age of 18. But he's best known, and this is how you'll know him, for his little book of sayings published under the name Brother Lawrence, called The Practice of the Presence of God. When Brother Lawrence lay on his death bed, rapidly losing physical strength, he said to those around him, "I'm really not dying. I'm just doing what I've been doing for the past 40 years and doing what I expect to be doing for all of eternity." And they looked at him with great curiosity and they said, "What is that?" He said, "I am worshiping the God that I love."

And that's what faith is. That's what faith is wrapped around. Do you love Him today? Do you love Him? "Oh how I love Jesus." Boy, we can sing it, can't we. Do we love Him enough that we would cling to Him and cling to His word? Then what Joshua tells them and what God's telling us, you're safe. You're secure. Don't worry about the left and don't worry about the right. Walk in the safety and the security of knowing that you're focusing on Him, then you can possess the life that God has given you in Christ.

The affliction of no faith

But then, finally, the affliction, now listen carefully, of no faith. You say, "Well, brother Wayne, I'm not going that route." Actually that's really not a true statement, because we're going to walk by faith one way or the other; it's the object of our faith. But I'm going to call it no faith. When it comes to spiritual faith and what we're talking about, I'm going to say no faith, because it doesn't measure. We can rest assured if we choose not to cling to God and His word, we choose not to walk by faith, there's a huge price in there that we're going to pay. Now, does God work in that? Absolutely, He drives us right back to Himself. But I want to tell you, if you've been there you know what I'm talking about, a lot of pain.

Verse 12: "For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations," this is a warning. They only had two choices just like us, we're clinging to God or we're clinging to our flesh. He continues, "For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you," and notice, they had divided the land but had not conquered it, so remember that, because the book of Judges picks that up. "And intermarry with them so that you associate with them and they with you." Joshua presents a

possibility; it had happened before. And so he presents the possibility again and which it does happen, by the way, in Judges. This possibility, and it's a blatant disregard for everything God has done, everything God has said, and he presents that as a possibility.

And here comes the warning, verse 13, "Know with certainty that the Lord your God will not continue to drive these nations out in before you." It's almost like God is saying if this is really what you want, and this is what you're going to pursue, okay, I'll give it to you. I don't think we want that. In fact, America today doesn't want what it's getting if you'll really think about it. "But they will be a snare and a trap to you." A snare and a trap produced bondage in a person's life. And then he says, "And a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes." A whip and thorns produced pain in somebody's life and ultimately brings about some form of death. He says, "Until you perish from off this good land, which the Lord your God has given you."

And then he says, "Now behold, today I'm going the way of all the earth." He speaks of dying. He says, "I'm dying." And he says, "And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed." Not one; he said, now listen, God is faithful. Look at what he said. "All of you have been fulfilled and not one of them has failed." And Joshua once again reaffirms this is why you want to cling to Him. This is why you want to glue yourself to Him. But then Joshua warns, "And just as He is faithful," God is faithful to honor when people yield to Him, there is also the other side of that: He's also faithful to chastise their obedience. You say, well, is it for a good reason? Well, certainly it is, to drive us back to Himself. But there's a lot of pain and there's a lot of bondage when we choose not to walk by faith.

Verse 15, "It shall come about that just as all the good words which the Lord your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the Lord will bring upon you all the threats until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God has given to you. When you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the Lord will burn against you and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given to you."

Thank God we're in the new covenant. Thank God He doesn't wipe us off the face of the earth. Thank God He doesn't take His Spirit from us. However, we have to see the spiritual principle here. There is a consequence to choosing not to walk by faith, whether we like it, whether we don't like it. But when we choose to say, "I'm doing it my way, I'm not going to do it Your way," there's pain and there's bondage. And what we do, we fail to experience and possess the life that God says is ours; bottom line, transgress the covenant of the Lord, and there will be pain and there will be chastisement.

You know what? This would be really good for our nation to hear over this weekend. Do you not agree? To understand what we've done and what we're now living in. There's a godly woman that tried to get this across. I doubt if anybody listened to her, but thank God she said it. It's the best I've heard. It's Billy Graham's daughter, Ann Graham Lotz. I have a lot of respect for her. Here's a transcript from when they asked her the question about 9/11. Why would God allow such a thing? Billy Graham's daughter was interviewed and they asked her, "How could God let something like this happen," referring to September 11. Ann Graham gave an extremely profound and insightful response. She said, "I believe God is deeply saddened at this just as we are. But for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. Being the gentleman that He is, I believe that He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand He leave us alone?"

In light of recent events, terrorists attacks, school shootings and so on, I think it started when Madelyn Murray O'Hare complained she didn't want prayer in our schools. And we said okay. Then someone said you better not read the Bible in school. The Bible says thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, and love your neighbor as yourself. And we said okay. Then Dr. Benjamin Spock said we shouldn't spank our children when they've misbehaved because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem. We said an expert should know what he's talking about and we said okay. Now we're asking ourselves why our children have no conscience, why they don't know right from wrong and why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers, their classmates and themselves. Probably if we think about it long and hard enough we can figure it out. I think it has a great deal to do with we reap what we sow. Funny how simple it is for people to trash God and then wonder why the world's going to hell. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but we question what the Bible says.

Pretty clear. America involves you and me, folks. And I'll tell you what, when we put this in the Christian perspective, glue yourself to God, glue yourself to His word. "Why would I do that, Wayne?" Well, if you've never experienced Him you won't. But if you've experienced His power and seen what He wants to do in your life then you can't help but do that because it comes out of a motive of love, which He has Himself produced in your life. And as you live that way, then chapter 24, which comes up next week, will be understandable. "Choose you this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house," Joshua says, "we will serve the Lord." That's what it looks like to live by faith.

Can I ask you a question? Just simple, you can ask me the same one. I mean, we're all in the same boat. Are you walking by faith or are you walking after the flesh? If you're not walking by faith remember this, remember it carefully, that's idolatry. That is idolatry. How many forms it takes, millions of them. It's either faith or flesh, faith or idolatry. And that's what he tells them. You don't need men. You don't need to be of Chuck Swindoll. You don't need to be of John McArthur. You don't need to be of Wayne Barber. You

be of Christ. Glue yourself to Him. Attach yourself to Him and walk in the wonders of what He has for you. That's the message Joshua leaves to the nation of Israel.