JOSHUA

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Possessing Your Possessions

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 4, 1977 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:1–5, 7–9

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

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Introduction

Turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of Joshua. Today, we're beginning a new study. We're going to be preaching through the book of Joshua. What a wonderful study it's going to be! The book of Joshua is a thrilling book. It's a book that speaks of victory. So, in these coming weeks, I invite you to come with me on a journey with Joshua, and together we're going to cross swollen rivers; together we're going to see powerful and massive walls as they fall at the shout of victory; and together we're going to see great giants put to flight and routed by God's people. And not only is this going to be the story of what God has done, but we're going to discover that the book of Joshua is going to

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be a revelation of what God is doing and what God will do for you and for me, because, you see, the book of Joshua is more than history.

Paul told us in the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 11, that, *"All these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition."* (1 Corinthians 10:11) And so, you see, New Testament Christians are to find truth and application in these Old Testament stories. And today, our first message is going to be called "Possessing Your Possessions."

God has given to every one of us a possession, and that possession is victory. Every Christian has victory as a gift. Every Christian is to be living a victorious life. Every Christian is to be an overcomer. You say, "Brother Rogers, I know some Christians who are not victorious." Well, I know some Christians who are not victorious, too, but that's not God's plan. God has given to you victory, and if you're not living a victorious life—I mean, right now, if you're not living a victorious life—you, sir; you, lady; you, young person, are living beneath your privileges. And while the Bible admits the possibility of failure, it never assumes the necessity of failure. As a matter of fact, the Bible says we're to always triumph in the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:14) And the book of Joshua is a book that is written to show us—to show you and me—how we might have the victory that our Lord wants us to have.

And so I want you to notice four simple points.

I. There Is a Possession to Possess

I want you to notice that there are some possessions to possess. I begin reading in verse 1: *"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give unto them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you…"*—now, the phrase that have I given you is an important phrase, so please mark it, underscore it—*"that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast."* (Joshua 1:1–4)

Now, the Israelites were now in the wilderness. They had come out of the land of Egypt and they were headed toward Canaan. Canaan is the Promised Land, the land of victory and the land of peace. And God said, "Now, you cross over Jordan and possess this great land, this vast land, this bounteous land, this beautiful land, this land that flows with milk and honey. It's yours. I have given it to you. Now, go in and take it!"

That was the history of it. But notice the implications of it. You see, Egypt represents the domain of the lost person. While the Jews were in Egypt, they were under the cruel

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power of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh had them in his domain. He was a cruel taskmaster, and he represents the devil. And Egypt, the land of bondage, represents the condition of every unsaved boy, girl, man, and woman that's listening to my voice. But remember, they came out of Egypt, and God delivered them out of Egypt by a miracle: the death of the Passover lamb, the opening of the Red Sea. They came out, and that represents the miracle of our new birth when we come out of the land of bondage. But when they came out of Egypt, they entered into a vast desert called the wilderness.

Now it's all right to be in the wilderness for a little while; there is a legitimate wilderness experience. That is when we're little babies in Jesus. The Bible calls a new Christian a babe in Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:1) But if he stays in the wilderness too long, then the Bible no longer calls him a babe in Christ; the Bible calls him a carnal Christian. The word *carnal* means "fleshly." Now he's saved. He's come out of Egypt. But he's wandering around in the wilderness. He has no victory, he has no joy, and he has no accomplishment. He has come out of Egypt, but he's never entered into Canaan.

Now, Canaan, in the Bible—the land that we're discussing right here in verse 4—is the land of victory; it is the land of peace. So many people want to call Canaan heaven, and they get their typology all mixed up. They kind of mix their metaphors. They're like that preacher who prayed, "Lord, if there happens to be a spark of fire in this church, please water that spark." Well, that didn't come out just right, and sometimes people mix their typology in the Bible. They want to make Canaan a type of heaven. And, Brother Tommy, some of our songs sing about Canaan as if it's a type of heaven. But really, Canaan is not a type of heaven. The Promised Land is not a type or a picture of heaven.

There was warfare in Canaan. I hope there's not going to be any more warfare in heaven. There was sin in Canaan. I hope there's not going to be any sin in heaven. I know there will not be. They went into Canaan and went back out. I hope once we get to heaven we're there to stay. Why, there were giants and failures in Canaan. They're needn't be, but there were some. So Canaan is not a picture of heaven. But it is a picture of the believer's possession, the victorious life that a Christian is supposed to have. And do you know, I'm afraid that there are some who are listening to me, if they're not careful, they will have come out of Egypt, but they never will have entered into Canaan, and they will die in the wilderness never knowing what the life of victory is.

Why is Canaan in the Bible a picture of the life of victory?

A. **Canaan Meant Release**

Well, in the first place, Canaan meant to these people release. You see, up until this time they had been a nation of slaves; but now they have been set free. And they're to live a life of freedom, a life of release. The Bible says to those of us who are Christians,

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in Romans chapter 6, verse 14, *"Sin shall no longer have dominion over you."* (Romans 6:14) Canaan represents freedom. The Bible says, *"If the Son…shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."* (John 8:36)

Did you know that those people today who are talking the most about freedom—I'm talking about the new morality and all of that business, which is the old immorality under a new name—they talk more about freedom and have less of it. The Bible calls them *"the servants of sin."* (Romans 6:17, 20. And they say, "I'm free. I don't have to listen to that ole' Bible. I don't have to do this; I don't have to do that. I want to be free." They say they're free, but Satan says, "Jump," and they say, "How high?" They're slaves to their lust; they are slaves to their passion; they're slaves to their temper; and they're slaves to their impulses. But Jesus sets us free, and the land of Canaan is a land of release.

B. **Canaan Meant Refreshment**

But not only was it for these Jews a land of release, but it was also for them a land of refreshment. You see, up until this time they had been in the desert. And do you know what they had in the desert to eat? What? Manna. And do you know how many times they ate it? Three times a day. And do you know how many days in the week they ate it? Seven days a week. And do you know how many weeks in the year? Fifty-two weeks a year. You know how many years? Forty years. Manna in the morning, manna in the evening, and manna at suppertime! I want to tell you they'd had it up to here with manna! Really, they were sick and tired of it! They said, "Our souls loathe this light bread." (Numbers 21:5) That's what they called it. They were sick of manna.

But you see, Canaan was a land of corn and wine. Canaan was a land of luscious grapes and pomegranates. Canaan was a land of milk and honey. It was a land of abundance. And so, the land of Canaan not only meant release, but it meant refreshment.

Don't you want to be refreshed? Aren't you tired of being bored with your Christian life? You know, I know folks who have had just enough religion to make them miserable: they have come out of Egypt, but they've never entered into Canaan.

I heard about a man who hadn't been to church for a long time. His pastor went to see him. He said, "Why haven't you been?" He said, "Well, the kids have been sick. And you know, the weather, it's been raining; it's rained everyday—rain, rain, rain!" The pastor said, "But it's dry at church." He said, "Yes, and that's another reason why I haven't come."

Oh, aren't you tired of this old, dry-as-dust, pale-as-a-corpse, dead-as-old-King-Tut type of Christianity? Don't you want something that's alive? Don't you want refreshment? Aren't you ready for the land of corn and wine? Don't you want a little milk and honey? Well, that's the land of Canaan.

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C. **Canaan Meant Rest**

It was a land of release. It was a land of refreshment. And it was also a land of rest. You see, the book of Hebrews calls it a land of rest. Now, rest doesn't mean inactivity. It's not rest from work; it's rest while you work. It's the difference between burning the wick or burning the oil. A Christian is to have a rest; his life is to be marked by rest, the believer's rest. Jesus said, *"Come unto me…and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28) But before they entered into Canaan, they knew no rest. They had come out of Egypt, but they didn't know any rest. They had gone round and round and round and round in the wilderness. They knew every grain of sand by name. They had sat on every cactus. But they had not found rest. Don't you want rest unto your souls? Wouldn't you just kind of like to relax in the arms of Jesus and find the believer's rest? That's what the land of Canaan pictures.

D. **Canaan Meant Reality**

And not only does it picture that, but it pictures reality—reality! You see, up until this time, they'd had sermons about Canaan; they'd had descriptions of Canaan. The Lord had told them what a wonderful land Canaan was, but they had not yet experienced it. Aren't you tired—and be careful how you answer this—of listening to sermons—be careful—aren't you tired of listening to sermons, but that's all? Wouldn't you like for some of this to be reality? Do you know there are folks who come to church and listen to sermons who have no more intention of applying what they hear than they do of what they see on television? They just simply watch it. It's something to hear, but not something really to take in and something to live. Wouldn't you like for your doctrine to turn to reality and for this preaching to turn to experience? And wouldn't you like to say, "God, I know what it is to live a victorious life"? God wants you to live a victorious life.

Now, here's the key to the whole thing: God has already given you victory. Did you hear me? God has given you victory. You say, "Well, why don't I have it, then, if God has given it to me? God has given it to you, but you haven't taken it. You have not yet possessed your possessions. The key to all of this is verse 3—look at it: God says, *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you."* (Joshua 1:3)

Now, notice they weren't even in the land yet. They hadn't even crossed the river Jordan yet. And God says, "Every place that the sole of your foot sets down—every place that you tread upon—that have I given you." Not, "I'm going to give it to you." "I've already given it to you. It's yours! Now, go! Take it!" When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He bowed his head and He said, *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) The victory was won. Jesus at Calvary said, *"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."* (John 12:31) Did you know the devil is already defeated? You say, "Well, he doesn't act like

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it." He hopes you don't find it out. He is already defeated. Jesus on the cross defeated Satan. Jesus, by the power of His redemptive death, has given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you now have the victory. *Christians don't pray for victory; they pray from victory.* Victory has already been won. The land of victory is yours.

Canaan represents release, refreshment, rest, and reality. That land is your land, but you are going to have to put the foot of faith upon the promises of God and say, "This is mine; I claim it." And until you do, you'll never know reality. We need to possess our possessions.

Did you know it's possible to have something and still not have it? Some of you have books in your library that you haven't read. Now I want to ask you a question: Whose book is it? It's your book but it's not your book, because you haven't read it. You have not yet possessed your possession.

When I was a little boy, my mother told me of an immigrant coming from the old country to this country, and he bought a passage on an ocean liner, but wanting to save money, he took along some cheese and crackers, and while everyone else was feasting there in the dining room, he was eating cheese and crackers. He almost starved till he discovered that the cost of his meals was also included in the ticket. Oh, you see, he'd already paid! I mean, it was his, but he failed to possess his possessions.

I want to tell you that the devil does not want you to know that God has given you the land of Canaan. God has given you rest. God has given you refreshment. God has given you reality. God has given it to you. Listen. The Bible says that He *"hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness"* (2 Peter 1:3)—not *will* give, *hath* given all things. In Jesus Christ you're complete. One of these days we're going to wake up to understand what God has already given His children. The Christian life is simply possessing your possessions. Do you know what the life of victory is? It is simply walking on conquered ground. It is putting down your foot by faith on the promises of God and saying, "This promise is mine. It is mine! I claim it!"

II. There Is a Promise to Plead

So, the first principle is there is a possession to possess. Now, the second principle is this: There is a promise to plead. Notice verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all of the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."* (Joshua 1:5) Now, not only did God tell them about their possession, but God also gave them a promise. And remember, all these things happen to them for examples to us. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

Now, look at this promise, and let's analyze it.

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A. **The Promise of a Conquering Power**

First of all, the Lord gives the promise of a conquering power. Notice in verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life."* (Joshua 1:5) There's power to do everything that God ask you to do. You say, "Brother Rogers, I don't have the power to cross the river Jordan. I don't have the power to drive out the giants of fear and doubt and lust and hate and envy and jealousy and worry. I don't have the power." No, but, dear friend, these enemies, these giants, cannot stand before you if you go in the name of Jesus, if you claim His power.

I tried to say this last Sunday; I want to say it to you—listen: Living victoriously *is not your* responsibility*; it is, rather, your* response *to God's* ability*.* When you understand this—when you understand that God doesn't call upon you to do anything, but God makes a promise that what He demands of you He will do through you—then you'll learn to live the victorious life. And God is saying that you're to be more than a conqueror. That's what Paul meant in the New Testament when he said in Romans chapter 8, verse 37, *"Nay, in all of these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Romans 8:37)—*"more than conquerors"*—super conquerors.

B. **The Promise of a Continuing Presence**

All right, listen. This promise is the promise of a conquering power. And it is the promise of a continuing presence. Look, again—verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all of the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."* (Joshua 1:5) Now, that's wonderful—a continual, constant presence. You see, what the Lord was saying is, the promises didn't die with Moses. God made a promise to Moses, but He reconfirmed it to Joshua; and the promises didn't die with Joshua. That's the reason I said this book is not what God has said; it is what God is saying.

You know, so many times we're prone to take these promises, and we're prone to date them and say, "Wouldn't it have been wonderful to live back then?" Friend, I'd rather be living now than to live back then. God was with Joshua. He's inside me: *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* (Joshua 1:5) You say, "Brother Rogers, can we take these applications and make them real to us today?" Of course we can! And that's what the writer of Hebrews meant when he wrote in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 5: he quoted this same promise. When the writer of Hebrews was trying to encourage those Christians, he said, *"For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* (Hebrews 13:5) And when he said that, when did God say it? God said it right here in the book of Joshua. And so he's saying, "Christians, God's already said it. Here's a principle: you might as well claim it."

Are you familiar with what is called the Amplified Bible? Let me see how many of you

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know what the Amplified Bible is. Okay, about a third of us, maybe twenty percent, maybe a fifth, know what the Amplified Bible is. Well, this is sort of an expanded translation. Now it's not a distortion of a reading into the Bible, but it's taking every Greek word and kind of squeezing all the juice out of it—you know, getting every drop out of it.

I heard of a man who was a strong man in the circus, and he would take a lemon and squeeze all the juice out of it. And then they offered a hundred dollars to anyone else who could get one more drop of juice out of it. And everybody tried—the strongest men in the community. But one little scrawny fellow came up there and took hold of that lemon and started to squeeze it: one, two, three, four, five drops came out. And they said, "Who on Earth are you?" He said, "I'm the treasurer of the Baptist church."

Now, let me tell you something. I want us to squeeze all the juice out of this verse. I want you to listen to it—Hebrews 13:5 in the Amplified New Testament: "For He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]" Isn't that good? "[I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not…" You see, our Greek scholars tells us that this is an intensive form that should be repeated three times.

I heard of a young seminary student who learned that in seminary. He went out to his country church and was trying to tell a little lady this, who had known and loved the Bible all of her life, and she'd lived by the promise, *"I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee."* And he was explaining to her how it should be, *"[I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not…"* She said, with a twinkle in her eye, "God may have to say it three times for you Greek *fellers*, but once is enough for me."

Oh, how wonderful—how wonderful—to know that not only is there the promise of His conquering power, but there is the promise of His continuing presence! Now, friend, if you've got His power, and if you've got His presence, you've got all you need to take your Canaan. There is a land of victory, and not only should you possess your possessions, but you should plead your promise. *"He hath said, I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee."*

III. There Is a Person to Prepare

Now, the third thing I want you to notice: Not only is there a possession to possess, and not only is there a promise to plead; but therefore there is a person to prepare. Notice verse 7: *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."* (Joshua 1:7)

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Now we have said that God gives the victory, and there's nothing we can do to get the victory; God already gives it to us. And yet there this verse that tells us that we've got to be strong, we've got to be courageous, and we've got to be obedient. And we say, "Now, pastor, those are exactly the three things I'm not. I'm not strong; I'm weak. I'm not courageous; I'm a coward. And I'm certainly not obedient; I turn from the right and the left—all the time, to the right and the left. I just don't obey the Word of God like I ought—little ol' me, little ol' weak me—so how can God be asking me to be strong and to be courageous and all of these things?

Well, look. Joshua was flesh and blood just like you. And here's the secret—are you listening? Everything God demands of you, God supplies for you. Every command is a promise. *Behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command.* You see, God doesn't want you to be strong in your strength. God doesn't want you to be bold in your strength. God doesn't want you to be obedient in your strength. You see, you have to understand verse 7 in the light of verse 5 and in verse 6, where our Lord is saying, "I'm going to be with you. I'm going to strengthen you. I will not leave you." And because of that, He tells us to be strong. Do you understand? It's not my strength. It's His strength in me.

Did you know that weak people can choose to be strong? Did you know that you can have strength by a choice? Did you know that cowardly people can choose to be bold? Did you know that disobedient people can literally, actually, choose to be obedient? But there is a person to prepare; and if you think that you're going to sit idly by, then you're wrong. Victory is God's doing. God gives us victory, and then God promises us victory. But not only is there a possession to possess, not only is there a promise to plead; there is a person to prepare. Are you today willing to say, "I will by the grace of God be strong; by the grace of God, I will be courageous; by the grace of God, I will be obedient"? There is a person to prepare.

IV. There Is a Plan to Pursue

Now, finally, there is a plan to pursue. And I want us to notice in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein."* (Joshua 1:8) Notice now He's already said, "You must obey me." And now He's going to tell him how, you see. Here is the plan to pursue: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* (Joshua 1:8)

Here is God's plan. Now, He—God—showed us our possessions. God gave us a promise. God told us to prepare. And then God gave us a plan for taking the land. It's

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right here in verse 8.

Now, let's look at it in three parts.

A. **We Are to Proclaim the Word of God**

First of all, we are to proclaim the Word of God. Look at it again: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth."* (Joshua 1:8) The Word of God is to dwell in us richly. But not only is it to be in us; we're to be speaking the Word of God. There is power in the Word of God. Did you know that you can use the Word of God as a sword with which to take the land? Did you know that—that the Word of God in your mouth is like a sharp two-edged sword? The devil would come against you as he came against Jesus. But Jesus vanquished Satan by the Word. The Word was in His mouth. He proclaimed it. Oh, there's power in speaking the very words of the Scripture. Have you used the Scripture as your battle-axe? Have you used this Word of God as a hammer to break the rock into pieces? Have you? Have you used it as your power of attorney when you go in to take the land that God Almighty has given unto you? We're to proclaim the Word.

I like that verse in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 29, that says, *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."* (Ephesians 4:29) Are the words of your mouth edifying?

John Bunyan, one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, was converted by listening to the conversation of several women. I wonder if someone were to eavesdrop on your conversation, would they be saved as a result?

B. **We Are to Ponder the Word of God**

You see, we are to proclaim the Word of God. We're to let the Word of God be in our mouths. That's part of the victory. But not only are we to proclaim the Word of God—look, again, in verse 8: *"But thou shalt meditate therein day and night."* (Joshua 1:8) We are to ponder the Word of God. It's not simply enough to quote it; we are to turn it over in our minds. I never preach a sermon but I take the Word of God and I chew on it, and I digest it, and I turn it over; and over and over in my mind, and all night long when I'm sleeping, I am preaching. Did you know that? All last night while I was asleep, I was going over this scripture. And I wake up in the morning conscious of the fact that the Word of God has been going through my mind, up and down through my mind—to ponder the Word of God; to meditate on it.

This word *meditate* has the connotations and the overtone of our word *humming*. You know, do you ever go around with a little ditty in your mind, a little tune that you just can't get out of your mind, and you just hum it? It's a little tune you can't get out of your mind. The Word of God is to be like that. It's like something that you just hum, that you

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go over and over and just keep the Word of God in your heart and in your mind. You see, it must be absorbed in your system before it can do you any good.

It's not enough just simply to read the Word. We used to do a thing—I don't even know whether we do it anymore or not. Do we mark up for daily Bible readings? Is that back in ancient times? Tell me, Brother Bob, we don't do that anymore, do we? Tommy Jr., do we do that anymore? You don't—I can tell, you rascal. All right, we used to mark up for daily Bible readings. And I know, when I was an intermediate—that's what we called them then; I'm dating myself. Now we call them young people or something. But then we were intermediates, and we had to do our daily Bible reading. And, man, we had a passage—there wasn't anything really wrong with this—but we read it, you know, and then, we could mark it up; but sometimes we had no idea what we read, but we read it, see?

Some of you read the Bible and wonder why it doesn't do you any good. You remind me of that definition of education. Do you know education is? Education is that process by which the material in the professor's notebook gets into the student's notebook without going through the mind of either one.

We are to take the Word of God and let it dwell in our minds. We're to chew on it. We're to hum it. We're to meditate upon the Word of God. And we are to ponder it.

C. **We Are to Practice the Word of God**

Now, watch. Here's the plan to pursue. Number one: Proclaim the Word of God—use it as your authority, as your sword, as your power of attorney. Number two: We are to ponder the Word of God; we are to meditate, and we're to let the Word of God dwell in us richly. And, thirdly—and here's where the rubber meets the road—we are to practice it.

Now, look. Right now we've been all giddy talking about possessing our possessions, and it's all sounded good. Now, some of you are going to tune me out if you're not careful. Look at the last part of verse 8: *"Meditate therein day and night, that"*—in order to—*"thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then"*—and may I say, only then—*"thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* (Joshua 1:8)

You see, the proclamation and the pondering of the Word of God are to produce in us the obedience to the Word of God. We are to proclaim it; we are to ponder it; but we are to practice the Word of God. This is the way to possess your possessions. You are to enter into that land with the title deed—the Word of God—and the sword—the Word of God in your hand, practicing, obeying, the Word of God.

Now I don't care how much you sit in this congregation and nod your head and say *amen*, that you believe the Bible. You want me to tell you the proof of whether you

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believe the Bible: Do you obey it? You see, when you obey the Bible, what you're saying is, "God, I believe it so much; and, God, I trust you so much, that I'm going to do what you tell me to do."

Now, remember we said that Canaan was reality, that God becomes real. Do you know I'm speaking to some people today who hear sermons about God, but God is not real to them? They say, "O God, I wish you were real. I wish that you were real. I wish that I knew you."

Do you want me to tell you how to make God real to you? Listen. Meditation gives you knowledge about God; obedience gives you knowledge of God. Let me say that again: Meditation gives you knowledge about God; obedience gives you knowledge of God. There is no way to know God without obeying God. Let me give you a scripture from the New Testament. Let's just turn to it. Turn to John chapter 14, verse 21. You have been sitting there without turning for too long. Okay, look in verse 21: *"He that hath my commandments,"*—that's the Word of God—*"and keepeth them…"*—the word *keep* means "to obey, to do what's contained therein"—*"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"* (John 14:21).

Now *you can say all you want about loving Jesus, but if you don't keep His commandments, you're a liar. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."* (John 14:21) Do you want the Lord to manifest Himself to you? Do you want the Lord to be very real to you, to show Himself to you? Then, dear friend, if you will take the commandments of God and begin to keep those commandments, you're going to find out that the Lord is going to manifest Himself to you; the Lord is going to make Himself extremely real to you.

And the reason that God seems distant to some people and that all of this seems unrelated is that they don't keep the Word of God. The reason some people never enter into Canaan; the reason some people never have victory; the reason some people never know the land of corn and wine, the land of milk and honey, the land of figs and grapes and pomegranates, the land of towering mountains and streaming rivers, is that they do not obey the Word of God.

Conclusion

There is a possession to possess: God has given you victory. There is a promise to plead: God says, "I will be with you, and no one will be able to stand against you." There is a person to prepare. And, oh, friend, there's a plan to pursue. We are to proclaim the Word of God. We are to ponder the Word of God. We are to practice the Word of God. And then, God gives us a promise.

Look in verse 9: *"Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be*

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not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua 1:9) Say, don't you think it's about time that you possessed your possessions? Don't you think that it's about time that you started putting forward the foot of faith and saying, "This one is mine. My Lord has given it to me, and I'm not going to let the giants of doubt and despair move me out of this land"?

Let me talk to those of you who are not saved right now. If you should die right now, you'd go straight to hell. You've never received Christ. Your sins are not forgiven. And yet there's a sense in which salvation is yours, but you're still not saved. Salvation is yours, because Jesus Christ died for you. Salvation is yours, because Jesus Christ bought it on the cross. It's paid for—paid in full with the rich, red, royal, ruby blood of Jesus on the cross. He died for your sins. He died for the sins of the entire world; and yet it's not yours. And do you want me to tell you why it's not yours? It's yours, but it's not yours, because you have not yet possessed your possession. There's nothing for you to do to make yourself qualified for salvation. Jesus has already made you qualified. Your salvation is bought and paid for with the crimson blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it will not be yours until you possess your possessions, until you say, "I claim by faith what Jesus Christ did for me on the cross."

Others of you have done that. You've come out of Egypt, but you've stopped short. You've bogged down in the wilderness, and you're stuck in the glaring desert of sand; and you want a life of victory. Dear friend, it's time that you possessed your possessions. It's time that you said, "My God has given it to me. I don't have to beg Him for it. I'm going to thank Him for it. And I'm going to take the Word of God as my sword, and I'll enter in. And there's no power of hell that's going to stop me. By the grace of God, I'm going to be a victorious Christian."

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Claiming Our Canaan

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 19, 1987 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:1-8

"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel."
JOSHUA 1:2

Outline

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Introduction

It's a brand new day, claiming our Canaan. We sang it this morning. And, ladies and gentleman, we are on the threshold of breaking ground on our new building, and I want to talk to you about something more wonderful than possessing a piece of property and building a building. I want to talk to you about victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, listen to me, folks, the Book of Joshua is history, and when you open the Book of Joshua, you begin an adventure. You see Joshua and the people of God as they cross the swollen river on dry ground. You see them as they march around the walls of Jericho, and give the shout of victory, and the walls fall down flat. You see them as they go out against giants in walled cities, ensconced upon the mountaintop, and you see as God gives victory after victory.

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Now, it happened. These are not fables; these are not fairy tales. It literally happened. But, ladies and gentleman, it is more than history. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 that *"all these things happened unto them for examples [to us]"* (1 Corinthians 10:11). And so, we're to learn, because the land of Canaan, dear friend, stands for victory for the people of God today.

I want to tell you something, folks: if we have victory in our hearts and in our lives, if we become the kind of Christians God wants us to be, then that's more important than building those buildings. As a matter of fact, I don't think we'll build them unless we are the people God wants us to be. I want to tell you, dear friend, if we build them and are not the people God wants us to be, it will all be a colossal waste of time. So, I want to talk to you not so much about a piece of real estate, a pile of stones—I want to talk to you about the people of God, who are here right now. And, I want to tell you how to live in victory and how to walk on conquered ground.

Now, listen to me: What does Canaan stand for, for the New Testament Christian? Well, three things:

A. Canaan Stands for Freedom

First of all, it stands for freedom. When those people came out of Egypt into Canaan, they were no longer slaves. They'd been a nation of slaves, but now they were to be free. And, what does that tell us? When we walk in victory, the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, makes us free. And, the Bible tells us that *"sin shall not have dominion over you"* (Romans 6:14). When the devil says, "Jump," we don't have to say, "How high?" We can say, "I don't have to obey you, and I don't have to obey the flesh. I'm no longer a servant of sin."

B. Canaan Stands for Fullness

But, not only did it mean freedom—hey, folks, Canaan, for them, meant fullness. They entered into a land of hills, and valleys, and rivers, and streams, of corn and wine, of oil, of figs, and grapes, and pomegranates. It was a land of fullness. Up until this time, they'd been living on a desert diet; they'd been eating manna. We say, "Manna—wasn't that pretty good?" Well, friend, manna was only to sustain them; it wasn't to satisfy them. They weren't supposed to eat manna for forty years. They had been wilderness wanderers rather than Canaan conquerors, and they were eating manna until they were sick of it. And, they said, "Our souls loathe this light bread. Manna in the morning, and manna in the evening, and manna at suppertime"—they knew. A little kid never said, "Mama, what's for supper?" He knew what was for supper—manna. And, they were sick of it. But, Canaan meant fullness.

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C. Canaan Stands for Reality

And then, not only did it mean freedom and fullness—it meant reality. You see, up until this time all they heard was about Canaan. They'd heard sermons about it; they'd heard descriptions of Canaan, and promises. But, now they've crossed Jordan, and they've entered into Canaan. And, there was hope that turned to reality and faith that turned to fulfillment. You see, the problem in many churches is that there are many people who don't really expect victory, and they're sick and tired of sermons about it. They want to experience it. Now, what I'm talking to you about, dear friend, is reality here and now, not someday in—I'm talking about victory and reality here and now. I'm talking to you about freedom. I'm talking to you about fullness. I'm talking to you about fulfillment. That's what Canaan stands for.

And so, I want you to come with me into this first chapter of the Book of Joshua. We're going to look at the first eight verses, and I want to give you some principles here—some ideas about how you can claim your Canaan, how you can walk in victory, how you can come out of the wilderness and be a Canaan conqueror rather than a wilderness wanderer. Are you ready?

I. A Continuing Purpose

First thing I want you to notice is what I'm going to call "a constant purpose"—"a constant purpose," or "a continuing purpose" would be better. Look, if you will, in verse 1: *"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead. now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel"* (Joshua 1:1–2).

Now, Moses was the leader, and Moses was dead. Did God forget His purpose? No. God said, "Listen, Joshua, My purpose is the same as it was 40 years ago. Moses is dead, but I have a continuing purpose. My will—My plan for you—is that you go into this land. Whether other people go into the land or not is not the point. Now, you may say, 'My daddy didn't live in victory, and my granddaddy didn't live in victory; and I don't know anybody who did live in victory'—it makes no difference. Moses is dead, but My purpose is alive. And, I want you to go into this land." And, it's time, dear friend, that we stop measuring ourselves by other people and started measuring ourselves by God's plan and God's purpose, which is continued. God's plan for you is victory; God's plan is not for you that you stay in the wilderness. Let me make that point very brief and move to the second point. The first point is what I call "a continuing purpose." It will always be God's purpose that His people live in victory.

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II. A Certain Possession

The second thing that I want you to notice is a certain possession—a certain possession. Begin in verse 3: *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon"*—watch the language very carefully—*"that have I given unto you"*—not "will I give"; "I've already given it"—*"as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast"* (Joshua 1:3–4). Now friend, God didn't say, "I'm going to give you victory." God said, "I've already given you victory. I have already given you this land"—not, "I will give it," but, "I have given it unto you."

Would you learn this, dear friend—that victory is already yours? God has already given you victory. "Well," you say, "If God has already given me victory, that settles it. I don't have to worry about it anymore." Oh no, wait a minute—most of us are not living in victory. "Well," you say, "If God has given me victory, why am I not living in victory?" Well, God had given them the land of Canaan, but they weren't living in Canaan. Why? Because they failed to possess their possessions. "Well," you say, "that doesn't make sense. How do you possess your possessions?" Well, you can have something without having it.

I want to ask you a question: How many of you have books in your library that you haven't read yet? Let me see your hand. All right. Are those your books? Yeah. Have you possessed your possessions? They're yours, but you haven't possessed your possessions.

When I was a little boy, my mother told me of a man who bought a ticket on an ocean liner to leave the old country and come to the new country. This man was very poor, and it took all the money that he could get to get the ticket. So, he knew he wouldn't be able to eat the luxurious food that they served on the ocean liner, so he took along some cheese and crackers. When everybody would go into the sumptuous dining hall there, he sat alone and ate cheese and crackers. It was not until the end of the voyage that he learned that his meals were included in the ticket. Now folks, you can go to Heaven second-class if you want to, but victory is yours, but you need to possess your possessions. What God said to Joshua is, *"Every place that the soul of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you"* (Joshua 1:3), and you need to put the foot of faith on the promises of God and claim it.

Now, I want to ask you a question: How many have all of the love that you need? How many have all of the patience that you need? How many have all of the courage that you need? How many have all of the wisdom that you need? You say, "Certainly not me." But now, wait a minute—the Bible says in Ephesians 1:3 that *"God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"*—not "will bless," but "has blessed." God has given you all spiritual

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blessings. Wisdom, love, faith—are these things spiritual blessings? Yes. Has God given them? Yes. You say, "Do I have them?" No. Has God given them? Yes, but you haven't possessed your possessions. Peter says that God "*hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness"* (1 Peter 1:3). *"Every place that the soul of your foot shall tread upon, that hath I given you"* (Joshua 1:3). There is a certain possession. Victory is yours, dear friend. You don't fight for the victory. The victory was won at Calvary. Jesus won the victory. *"Now [is] the prince of this world…cast out"* (John 12:31). Our victory is victory in Jesus.

Now, there is a continuing purpose. I don't care what anyone else has done—God wants you into your Canaan. And, dear friend, there is a certain possession: it is victory. God says, "I have already given it to you. It is yours." Now, it is time for you to possess your possessions.

III. A Conquering Power

Now, the third thing I want you to notice is what I'm going to call "a conquering power." Look with me, if you will, in verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee"* (Joshua 1:5). God says, "Joshua, nobody is going to be able to stand against thee; you're going to be victorious in every circumstance because I am going to be with you. I will not fail you; I will not forsake you. There is a conquering power." Now, many of us, when we talk about being victorious, we say, "Well, you know, I'm just not the victorious type." Well, I knew that, and God knows that. You see, it is not your ability that counts. Listen to me—oh, my dear friends, listen to me: *victory is not your responsibility; it is your response to God's ability.* That's what victory is.

You see, "No man is going to be able to stand against you, Joshua." Why? *"As I was with Moses, so will I be with [you]"* (Joshua 1:5). *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). Do you think that Satan has the power to thwart the purposes of God? Do you think the devil has the power to keep you from being what God wants you to be? If I believed that, I'd be of all men most miserable. Satan cannot. If he could, he would, but he cannot keep us from victory. There is, dear friend, a continuing purpose that we live in Canaan. There, my dear friend, is a certain possession. God has already given us victory, and, therefore, there is a conquering power. "As I was with Moses, I'll be with you" (Joshua 1:5).

Nobody is going to be able to stand against you. You will not meet tomorrow, when you go into that office, you will not meet one circumstance for which God in you is not able. Do you believe that? I believe that with all of my heart. I would be greatly discouraged if I didn't believe that. *"Greater is he that is in you, than he…is in the world"* (1 John 4:4).

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Now, I want you to see something else. Let me give you a New Testament verse on that. The New Testament verse is Romans 8:37. In Romans chapter 8, Paul lists all of the things that might be against us, but then he says all of these enemies that might come against us. But then, he says, *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Romans 8:37). We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us—not just conquerors, not that we just squeeze through with a field goal the last two seconds of the game. When the game is over, it ought to be the Christians: 100, and the devil: 0. That's right. Listen, we are more than conquerors. The word doesn't mean "super conquerors"; it actually means "supra conquerors." The word "conqueror" doesn't even describe the way that we're to live. Does that characterize your life? You say, "Not so." Well, dear friend, it is because you have not claimed your Canaan. You have not possessed your possessions. You have not understood that God has already given you the victory in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

IV. A Constant Promise

The next thing that I want you to notice is not only the conquering power, but I want you to notice the constant promise that goes with the conquering power. Notice verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life"*—why?—*"as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee"*—now, that's God's promise. God can't lie. Notice in verse 6—*"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land"*—now, notice the next phrase—*"which I sware unto their fathers to give them"* (Joshua 1:5–6). Now, God swears by Himself because He can swear by no higher. He's saying, "As I live, saith the Lord"—says the Lord—"I'm going to do this." God has made a promise. It is an immutable promise, an unbreakable promise. God has promised victory to the children of God. You see, it's God's constant promise.

A. The Promises Are to All Saints

Now, listen to me, folks: first of all, the promises of God are to all saints. "As I was with Moses, so I'll be with you" (Joshua 1:5). Have you ever thought that the promises of God were perhaps for somebody but not for you? Have you ever opened the Bible, and read those promises of God, and said, "My, aren't those wonderful promises"? Look what God said to Peter. Look what God said to Paul. Look what God said to Moses. Look what God said to Joshua. But, in Psalm 119, the Bible says, *"Thy faithfulness is unto all generations"* (Psalm 119:90)—not just to them, to me.

When I was a boy, I was raised in West Palm Beach, Florida. Separating West Palm Beach from Palm Beach is Lake Worth, and we'd go across the bridge to Lake Worth. Lake Worth is where you have more millionaires per square inch than I suppose any

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other place on the face of the earth—Palm Beach, over there on the ocean front. There's a drive in Palm Beach called "Worth Avenue." Some time you need to walk down Worth Avenue. Worth Avenue—that's where you see the Mercedes Benzes, and the Rolls Royces, and whatever kind of cars you don't want. All right—all of those big automobiles and everything, and the ladies in the fur coats and everything. You just walk down, and you look in the windows there. We used to go as kids. I mean, folks, we couldn't afford a Popsicle, but we would go over there and walk down Worth Avenue and look in those windows. It's amazing to see the prices on those things on Worth Avenue. That's called "window-shopping." We knew that wasn't for us. We just looked in and saw what other people could have. Now, friend, people go window-shopping in the Bible so often: "Oh, isn't that a beautiful prophet"; "Oh my, look at that." One man said to his wife, "Why do you call it shopping? You never buy anything." She said, "Why do you call it fishing? You never catch anything." Listen, folks, one of these days, somebody is going to pick up the Bible, and read it, and believe it. And, the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves. Time to stop window-shopping through the Bible. *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with [you]"* (Joshua 1:5).

B. The Promises Are for All Seasons

It's for all saints, and it is for all seasons. Don't think that's what God has said; it is what God is saying. And, don't you let 2,000 years keep you from a blessing. It's just as true as though it were written this morning.

C. The Promises Are for All Situations

And friend, not only is it for all saints and all seasons—it's for all situations. Moses is dead. He was a great warrior, but he's dead. And now, here's a rookie leader, Joshua. Yes, there are giants. Yes, there are problems, but there's promise: "I swear to give you this land," God says. We need to understand that, dear friend.

V. A Courageous Person

Now, let me go on and move to the next thing—not only a constant promise, but a courageous person. Notice here in verse 7: *"Only"*—the word "only" qualifies it; it's not automatic—*"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest"* (Joshua 1:7). Now, what God is saying is, dear friend, that "there is to be a courageous person, and that person is to be you." Now, here, God says, "Joshua, it all depends on you." "Now, wait a minute, Adrian. You said a few moments ago that God does it all." That's true, but it still depends upon you. You see, God wants you to be courageous. God wants you to believe Him. God wants you to obey Him. You can't do it without Him, and

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He won't do it without you. You must cooperate with the Lord in courage, and strength, and obedience.

There were three things that Joshua needed: he needed courage because he was afraid; he needed strength because he was weak, and he needed obedience because he was unfaithful. Hey, folks, do you think that victory is for brave people. It's for weak people. Do you think that victory is for grave people? It's for fearful people. And, it's not for strong people; it's for weak people. It's not for faithful people; it's for unfaithful people. "You mean, God will give you victory if I am fearful, and weak, and unfaithful?" Oh no, but those are the kinds of people that God gives victory to.

You see, listen—if Joshua was already strong, do you think God would have told him to be strong? If he was already courageous, do you think God would have told him to be courageous? If he was already obedient, do you think God would have told him to be obedient? No, listen—the fact is that he wasn't, but he could be, because behind every promise of God is the power of God. And, when God tells me to be strong, then God supplies that strength for me. But, I must choose—I must choose. Do you know what courage is? *Courage is fear that has said its prayers.* You say, "Well, I'm not the victorious type." Neither was Josh, but God says, "Listen, Joshua, you can choose." Listen, here's a wonderful strength. Here's a wonderful thought: fearful people can choose courage; weak people can choose strength, and faithful people can choose obedience.

Don't tell me it can't be done. I did it yesterday. I ran into a problem for me—a giant, a real giant—and I needed help, and I wasn't able. You say, "Hey, what was it, Pastor?" I'm not going to tell you. I had to cast myself upon God. And, I want to tell you, this weak person was made strong, and this disobedient person was made obedient. I knew I had to preach this tomorrow—no need to preach something that wouldn't work. Dear friend, I want to tell you, I'm not talking to you about fairy tales. I am talking to you about courageous people who are strong in the Lord—in the Lord. Every command of God is a prophet of God, because behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command.

VI. A Controlling Principle

Now, let me just wrap this up by talking to you about one more thing, and that is a controlling principle. Now, this is the bottom line of the whole thing. We come to verse 8, and here is the controlling principle: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that"*—that means "in order that"—*"thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"* (Joshua 1:8). That is, "You're going to have victory in Jesus if you will follow this controlling principle." Now,

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this is the bottom line. I mean, he's been talking about all of these things—God's continuing purpose (that you're going to Canaan), God's certain possession. "I've already given it to you—all of these things." But, now he comes to the bottom line, and it is a controlling principle; and it's all wrapped up in the Word of God.

Now listen, folks, here is the guidebook for victory. Now, what God says to Joshua is three things.

A. **The Word of God Should Be in Your Mouth**

Now, first of all, he says, "The Word of God is to be in his mouth"—the Word of God is to be in his mouth" (Joshua 1:8). He is to be speaking the Word of God—not just reading it, not just memorizing it. He is to verbalize it in order to vitalize it. He is to speak the Word of God. There is something very powerful about taking God's words and speaking them. The Bible calls this "a confession of faith," where we stand on the Word of God, where we speak the Word of God.

Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. Three times the devil tried to get Jesus to sin. Three times Jesus actually verbalized the Word of God. Jesus took the Word of God, and He put it in His mouth; and He spoke it to Satan. I have given the devil the Word of God many times, and you need to do that. You know, it's so fun to give the devil the Word of God and then step out of the argument and say, "Now the argument is between you and Him"—between the devil and God—"let's see who is going to win."

You see, take the Word of God. We need to encourage one another with the Word of God. We come, and we meet on Sunday. We talk about ball games. We talk about the weather. We talk about fashions. We talk about finance. I heard a friend the other day—I met him—as we were shaking hands, he said to me, *"From the rising of the sun [to] the going down [thereof] the LORD's name is to be praised"* (Psalm 113:3). That's the way he greeted me. Hey, folks, that was a blessing to me. I carried that with me all day long just because he had the Word of God in his mouth.

John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, was converted. Let me tell you how he was converted—by hearing some women talk. Bunyan was eavesdropping, and these women were so filled with the Spirit, talking about God and the Lord. John Bunyan was converted by eavesdropping on a conversation. Hey, if somebody were eavesdropping on your conversation, would it lead them to Jesus? You see, "His Word shall be in your mouth" (Joshua 1:8). In order to vitalize it, we need to verbalize it.

B. **The Word of God Should Be in Your Mind**

But, wait a minute—not only should it be in your mouth, but it needs to be also in your mind, because it can't be in your mouth unless, first of all, it is in your mind. And so, look: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night"* (Joshua 1:8). You're to meditate on the Word of God. Get the

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Word of God in your mind. Just store it up in your mind.

The word "meditate" has in it the idea of humming. The Word of God is to be like a tune that you can't get out of your mind. Have you ever had a little ditty—a little tune—that you just kind of hum all day long? That's the idea of meditating on the Word of God.

You just store the Word of God down in your heart, and then you bring it up and you just think about it. You roll it over. You see, listen, folks—that's the way to have wisdom. Do you know what wisdom is? Let me give you a definition of wisdom: *wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view.* That's all wisdom is—just seeing life from God's point of view.

Well, how do you see life from God's point of view? You get the Word of God in your mind. And, how do you get it in our mind? By meditating on it. It's not just enough to read it—but to meditate on it. Do you know what they say college education is? A college education is that process by which the material in the professor's notebook gets into the student's notebook without going through the mind of either one. Now, it's not enough, dear friend, for you to get it down on paper. You've got to get it into your mind. It's got to be a part of you, where you absorb it. And, when you absorb it, you find yourself with the Word of God dwelling richly in you, and then you begin to think God's thoughts after Him.

My dear friend, many, many nights—I suppose, most nights before I go to bed—before I go to sleep, I will get a verse of scripture. Many times I'll go to my study and just read it and then go to bed with that in my mind. And, before I go to sleep, I'll roll it over. I'll think about it; I'll just ponder it. I'll say, "What does that mean? What does that say? How does that apply to me?" And, it's an amazing thing. When I wake up in the morning, a lot of that is just sorted out in my mind as I have slept all night, meditating on the Word of God.

I took these scriptures from the Bible. Psalm 1:1–2: *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."* Psalm 104:34: *"My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD."* Psalm 119:15: *"I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways."*

David was fleeing from Saul. Saul was hunting for David's life. Do you think that David was living a miserable life? Let me tell you a Psalm that was written while David was a fugitive—Psalm 63:3–6: *"Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips"*—why all of this? Well, listen—*"When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."* How was David able to keep his sanity?

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How was he able to say, “I lift up my hands into thy name, thy lovingkindness is better than life”? He, my dear friend, had the Word of God—not only in his mouth, but in his mind, as it was going over and over and over again. Meditation is not just an empty mind thinking of thoughts; meditation is a mind centered on Christ that brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

C. The Word of God Should Be Our Manner of Life

The third thing here is the controlling principle. The Word of God is to be in our mouth; the Word of God is to be in our mind. And then, the Word of God is in our manner of life. Look at it; it’s so wonderful: *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then”*—and may I say, “then only”?—*“thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and…thou shalt have good success”* (Joshua 1:8).

Conclusion

Do you know what success is? Obeying God. Do you know what victory is? Obeying God. Do you know what makes God real to you? Obey God. Bible study—even meditation—does not give you knowledge of God. Bible study gives you knowledge about God; obedience gives you knowledge of God. *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them”* (John 13:17). Jesus said, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21). When you begin to obey, Jesus becomes real. When you begin to obey the Bible verse, the flame in your hand, you’re walking on conquered ground.

Listen, put the Word of God in your mouth. Put the Word of God in your mind. Put the Word of God in your manner of life. Begin to obey God. Don’t turn to the right or the left. What He says to you, do. You say, “I don’t have the strength to do it.” He’s got the strength, and He has given you the victory. And, you need to put the foot of faith on the promises of God, and possess your possession, and say, “I’m going to claim my Canaan. I’m tired of being a wilderness wanderer.” And friend, it’s not just what God said to Joshua. *“These things happened [to] them for examples [to us]”* (1 Corinthians 10:11). I want you to live in victory.

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Facing a New Year

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 27, 2000 Time: 1800

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:1-8

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

Outline

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Introduction

Be finding the book of Joshua chapter 1. You know, when we come to the end of the year, almost instinctively, we come to the book of Joshua. I do, and I want to talk to you today about "Facing a New Year." The book of Joshua is history, but it is more than history: it is a gigantic object lesson on victorious living. And God's plan for you is victory. Now you hear me say that many times, but let me tell you that God's plan is victory for you. Victory is God's gift to you. Now the Bible always mentions the possibility of defeat—listen—never the necessity of it. You are to live in constant victory if you're a Christian.

Now the book of Joshua is how they claimed the land of Canaan. When we came

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out here to purchase this property and build on it, we affectionately called this land "our Canaan," and we sang a song over and over again: "It's a brand new day, claiming our Canaan." How many of you remember that song? Let me see your hand. Well, good. Those of you who came after we moved out here may not know that song, but we sang it over and over again: "It's a brand new day claiming our Canaan." We kind of lived in this book of Joshua, and we did rightly so, because while the book of Joshua is history, it literally happened. It is also devotional literature, for the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 11, *"All these things happened unto them"*—in the Old Testament—*"for examples"* to us (1 Corinthians 10:11)—those of us who live in the New Testament.

And so, here was Joshua. He was facing the land of Canaan, and it was a land of mountains, a land of rivers and valleys and grapes and pomegranates. It was also a land that was filled with giants—and not a one of them jolly. And there was all kind of hostility. And so, Joshua is coming out of the wilderness and into Canaan. No longer are the children of Israel going to be wilderness wanderers; they're going to be Canaan conquerors.

Now I want to give you six principles to help you this coming year to live victoriously. Now these are going to come straight from the Word of God, and I pray the God the Holy Spirit will write them upon your heart—that it's not just a pep talk; it's not pop psychology. This is not some "Atta boys." These are truths that are coming straight from the Word of God, because the land of Canaan represents victorious life—and I'm not forcing that; the Bible itself teaches this. Now it's history, but it is devotional history.

Now, let me read the first eight verses: *"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them."* Now here's the condition, however: *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest."* Now this is a key to prosperity. We talk about a prosperous new year—here it is! Verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written*

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therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." (Joshua 1:1–8)

I. A Steadfast Purpose

Now we're going to break this down into six divisions. The very first one is verses 1 and 2. It's what I want to call a steadfast purpose. Get the word *steadfast*. Now, watch it: *"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel."* (Joshua 1:1–2) Now the point is this: that up until this time, Moses had been leading them. Moses died, but God's purpose went on. "Moses is dead. Now, Joshua, go right on." God's purpose is still alive and well.

Now I want to make an application for us. All of these things happened so many years ago, but God is still steadfast in His purpose for us. What did Canaan represent to them? And then, I'll tell you what this message represents to you.

A. Freedom

First of all, Canaan represented to them freedom. If you're taking notes, just write it down: freedom. Up until this time, they had been a nation of slaves; they were slaves in Egypt. They're coming out of Egypt; they're going into Canaan, and they are to be free. Now, how does that apply to Adrian tonight? Romans 6, verse 14, says that *"sin shall [no longer] have dominion over you."* (Romans 6:14) I am not to be a slave to any kind of sin. God wants me to be free, and He wants you to be free. Say *amen*. You're to have freedom.

B. Fullness

I'll tell you what else Canaan meant to them: Not only freedom; it meant fullness. Now it was a land that was flowing with milk and honey. There were luscious grapes. There were pomegranates. There were figs, corn, wine, oil: all of these things were there—olives. And God said, "This is yours!" You and I are to be enjoying the fruit of the Spirit. We're not to be scrimping along spiritually. We are to be spiritually fat and full, and we're to be enjoying the fruit of the Spirit and the fullness of Jesus.

C. Fulfillment

Now I'll tell you what else God's purpose was for them: Not only freedom, and fullness; but it was also fulfillment. You see, up until this time, before they entered into Canaan, they'd only heard sermons about Canaan; they had never really been into Canaan. Are you tired of coming, listening to Adrian preach Sunday after Sunday about victory, and not enjoying it? Are you tired of just hearing all of these Sunday School lessons, all of

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these philosophies? Don't you think it is time that you actually began to appropriate the fullness that God has for you and the fulfillment that God has for you? God's plan for you is not to die in the wilderness. Now they had come out of Egypt, but they'd not yet gone into Canaan. I'm speaking tonight to some people who are saved: you've come out of Egypt, but you have not yet gone into Canaan. You are living in the waste. You're living in the wilderness. You're bogged down between Calvary and Pentecost. You've been to Calvary for pardon, but you haven't been to Pentecost for power.

Now here was a group of slaves saying, "We're going to be free!" Here was a group of people who've been dumped in the desert on a desert diet and eating manna every day. Now they're going to have corn and oil and wine, and milk and honey, and grapes and figs and pomegranates, and they're going to see with their eyes, walk on with their feet, live in the atmosphere of victory in Canaan.

II. A Settled Possession

So, the very first thing I want you to see in this chapter is what I want to call a steadfast purpose. God's purpose for you is to be a Canaan conqueror—to live in victory. Now here's the second thing: not only a steadfast purpose, but a settled possession. Look now in verses 3 and 4: *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you…"*—now, if you don't mind marking your Bible, just underscore that phrase—*"that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast."* (Joshua 1:3–4) Now God said, "I have given you this land: it is a settled possession." God did not say to Joshua, "I *will* give it to you." Are you listening? God says, "Look, I have given it to you. It is yours."

Now what you need to do is to possess your possessions. Many people have not yet possessed what God has given them. It is not that you say, "God, give me the victory"; God has given you the victory. You've heard me say it a thousand times: you do not pray for a victory; you pray from victory. God had already given them the land.

Somewhere years ago, I read about a man who was coming from the old country, from Europe, to this country. He got enough money for a passage on an ocean liner, and he realized that he needed to save his money for his start in the new land. And so he would not go into the dining room and eat with the rest of the passengers, but he had packed cheese and crackers, which he subsisted on for most of the voyage across. He would pass the dining room and look in there and see the passengers eating sumptuously. Finally he decided, "Well, at least I can have one meal," and he went in and asked the steward, "How much would it cost to eat one meal?" The steward said, "May I see your ticket?" He said, "There it is." He said, "Well, sir, your ticket includes the

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meals for the full passage."

Now here was a man who was living on cheese and crackers. He had already had his dining paid for, but he didn't enjoy it. Was it his? It was his, but he had not possessed his possessions. Does that make sense to you? You see, God says, *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you."* (Joshua 1:3) What we need to do tonight is to put our feet on the promises of God and say, "That is mine; that is mine; that is mine." God didn't say, "If you put your feet on it, I'll give it to you." God said, "I've given it to you. Now, put your feet on it. Possess your possessions."

May I ask you a question? How many of you have books in your library you haven't read yet? May I see your hand? Okay now, are those books yours? Well, yes, in a sense, but you have not possessed your possessions. We have blessings that are ours that we have not yet possessed.

Let me give you a verse of Scripture—Ephesians 1, verse 3—listen to it: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"*—now, listen to this—*"who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* (Ephesians 1:3) Now it doesn't say He will bless us; he says He has blessed us—has blessed us! With how many spiritual blessings? All spiritual blessings!

May I ask you a question? How many of you have all the love that you need? Now, don't lift your hand to these things, because I'm going to embarrass you in a moment if you don't lift your hand. How many of you have all the patience that you need? How many of you have all of the wisdom that you need? How many have all of the compassion that you need? "Well," you say, "no, pastor, I don't have all I need." Well, faith, love, wisdom, compassion—are these spiritual blessings? They are! And the Bible says, *"Blessed be…God…who hath blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* If you're in Christ Jesus, and Christ Jesus is in you, does He have love? Does He have power? Does He have wisdom? Does He have compassion? Does He have faith? Does He have these things? Yes! Is He in you? Yes! "In Him we're complete." (Colossians 2:10)

"Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, are you trying to tell me that I have all the love I need?" Yes! "All the patience I need?" Yes! "All the power I need?" Yes! "All the faith I need?" Yes! "Well, Pastor Rogers, if I have all that I need, how come I don't have it?" Simple: You've not possessed your possessions; you have not claimed what you already have. I mean, if you have Jesus, what more do you need? "In Him we're complete." That's what the Bible says: "In Him we are complete." We have this. God said, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, I have already given you." God has blessed us—Ephesians 1:3—*"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."*

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The next time you need patience, don't say, "God, help me to use my patience." Just say, "Thy patience, Lord," and see the difference it makes. The next time there's somebody you need to love, and you can't love them, don't try; just say, "Thy love, Jesus; I am calling upon your love in me," and see what happens, because He lives in you. You can't love them.

I sat up late one night with an Arab in Galilee, a precious friend, a man that I've known for many years. As a matter of fact, he's like a brother to me—professes to be a Christian. But we sat up late one night. He said, "Pastor, I cannot love the Jews." I said, "How can you say that?" He said, "I just can't love them." He said, "If you saw what happened to my brother who was tortured in prison, if you knew how they came in and took our land, if you'd been like I have been and seen them kill my mother before my eyes and stab me with a bayonet—look at this scar." He said, "I cannot love the Jews." He said, "Do I have to love them in order to be a Christian?" He said, "If I have to love them in order to be a Christian, then I can't be a Christian, because," he said, "I cannot love them."

It was about two in the morning. He's a precious friend of mine, a man about my age—a little younger. I said, "Saad, I want to ask you a question: Does Jesus love them?" He said, "I guess He does." I said, "Saad, does Jesus love them?" He said, "Yes, He loves them." I said, "Is Jesus in you?" He said, "Well, He's supposed to be." I said, "Why don't you let the Jesus in you love them? Just say, 'Lord, I can't. You never said I could. You can. You always said you would. You love them.'" And the light came on in his heart.

You see, the Bible says, *"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."* (Romans 5:5) We don't have what it takes—I don't have what it takes—to live the Christian life. You don't have what it takes to live the Christian life in and of yourself. But if you have Jesus, the Jesus in you is able—He is able! "In Him we're complete." (Colossians 2:10) And God has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* (Ephesians 1:3) And if you run out of your love, you run into His; you run out of your patience, you run into His; you run out of your wisdom, you run into His. Call upon Him, and put the foot of faith upon the promises of God. You see, there is a settled possession. Quit fighting a battle already lost. Start enjoying a victory that's already won.

III. A Sovereign Power

Now here's the third principle, and I've already alluded to it and gotten ahead of myself almost. There is also a sovereign power. Look, if you will now, in verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."* (Joshua 1:5) What a promise

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that was! That was a promise to Joshua. "Well," you say, "yes, that was Joshua, so long ago. I wish he had made that promise to me." Well, friend, He has made that same promise to you. Let me tell you something: *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4) We're talking now about spiritual things. There is no enemy of God that can stand against you. You see, *the victory is not your responsibility; it is your response to God's ability.*

That's the reason the Apostle Paul talked about all of the things that were against him in Romans 8, which probably is my favorite chapter in the Bible—at least tonight it is—and he mentions all of these enemies; and then, he says in Romans 8, verse 37, *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Romans 8:37) Ron Dunn says that means we don't kick a field goal in the last three seconds and win the game. We're more than conquerors! It's eighty to zip! Listen. The word literally means we are "super-conquerors" in the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a settled possession. God says, "I've given it to you." There is a sovereign power. God says, *"As I was with Moses…I will be with thee"* (Joshua 1:5)—"There's not anybody who's going to be able to stand against you."

IV. A Sure Promise

Now, not only is there a sovereign power; there's a sure promise—and that's the fourth thing. Look, if you will again, in verse 5: *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."* (Joshua 1:5)

A. For All Saints

Now, see, Moses died, and Joshua was still alive. Do you know what many of us think? Many of us think that the people in the Bible were different than we are: they breathed a different air; somehow they put their pants on different; somehow they were wired different. Folks, they were flesh and blood just like we are. And what God is saying: "Look, I was with Moses. I'm going to be with you." The promises of God are to all the saints. Don't think that God has favorites. God doesn't have favorites; God has intimates. There are people who get on good ground with God, but it's because they choose to. I don't know how much of God you have, but you have all that you want. The promises of God did not die with Moses, and the promises of God did not die with Peter, Paul, James, and Bartholomew.

You know what many people do? They look in the Bible, and they look at these promises, and it's like it makes good preaching. They may make good verses to type out and put on the refrigerator with a magnet. But we don't really appropriate them. We just sort of window-shop through the Bible: "Oh, isn't that a precious promise! Oh, that's sweet! Yeah! Oh, oh, look at that!" A man said to his wife, "Why do you call it shopping?

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You don't buy anything." She said, "Why do you call it fishing? You don't catch anything." We window-shop through the Bible. Leonard Ravenhill, who recently went to heaven, said, "One of these days, somebody's going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves." You see, these promises are *yea* and *amen*. They did not die with Moses.

B. For All Seasons

The promises are for all saints, and they are for all seasons. Time does not erode away the promises. I love Psalm 119, verses 89 and 90: *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations."* (Psalm 119:89–90) That means His faithfulness is for us coming up on the year 2001.

C. For All Situations

And not only for all saints in all seasons, but all situations, His promises are good. There were going to be difficulties for Joshua. There were difficulties for Moses. God will never leave us; never forsake us.

Now, look in verse 6—I love this in verse 6: *"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them."* (Joshua 1:6) Now, where are the fathers? They didn't get it. They died in the wilderness. The point being is this: If you look around at some people—maybe people that you know, maybe your pastor, maybe your Sunday School teacher, maybe your father, maybe your mother—and they did not live in victory, so, you think, you can't live in victory. What He's saying: "Look, Josh, those people who died in the wilderness, I promised this to them; but they didn't get it." Don't judge your life by other people; don't, just because others have blown it. Get your eyes off their failure, and get your eyes on the promises of God, the settled promises of God.

V. A Stalwart Person

Now in order to do that, let's move to the fifth thing: Not only is there a settled promise, but there is a stalwart person that must claim these promises. Again, verses 6 and 7: *"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest."* (Joshua 1:6–7) Now the promise—this wonderful promise that is there; this sure promise—what good is this sure promise unless there is a stalwart person to claim the promise?

Now in just a few verses before, this God says, "I'm the One who's going to take care of you, Joshua." Look at it in verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand*

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before thee…as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." (Joshua 1:5) But then, He says, *"Only be thou strong."* (Joshua 1:7) There's no contradiction here. Joshua can't do it without God. God won't do it without Joshua. Behind every command of God is a promise; but we must believe and receive.

There are three things in these verses that Joshua needed: He needed strength. He needed boldness. And he needed obedience. And all of these are given from above, but we have to choose them. Do you choose obedience tonight? Do you choose strength tonight? Do you choose boldness tonight? Did you know Joshua later on talked to the children of Israel and he said, *"Choose you this day whom ye will serve"*? (Joshua 24:15) You see, did you know that weak people can choose strength? Did you know that cowardly people can choose boldness? Did you know that unfaithful people can choose obedience? I mean, you're not a victim about these things. If you want strength, choose it. If you want boldness, choose it. *"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."* Be strong. Why would He tell him to be strong, unless he needed to be strong and he could be strong? You can be strong. You can be courageous. You can be obedient. Question: Do you choose to be? Or are you going to go right out those doors the same way you came in? It's up to you. There's a sure promise, but there must be a stalwart person.

VI. A Stabilizing Principle

Now, let me come to the final thing: There is a stabilizing principle that just kind of wraps it all up. Look in verse 8, and here is the principle now in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that"*—in order that—*"thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then…"*—underscore that—*"then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* (Joshua 1:8)

Now, what is this stabilizing principle? Well, it deals with the Word of God.

A. The Word of God Is to Be in Your Mouth

First of all, the Word of God is to be in your mouth. Look in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth."* Learn to say the Word of God. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 29: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."* (Ephesians 4:29) John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, was saved as a result of hearing a conversation between two women talking about the Lord. I wonder, would anybody get saved if they listened to your conversation? Let the Word of God be in your mouth. There is something very powerful about living victoriously when we begin to talk the Word of God.

A verse that my wife pointed out to me several years ago that she loves very much

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and I love very much is Malachi chapter 3, verses 16 and 17: *"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."* (Malachi 3:16–17) What he's talking about here is, God looks down from heaven, and He sees people talking about Him: they fear the Lord; they talk about Him. When you come to Bellevue, rather than talking about the weather, the ball games, the ice, whatever, talk about Jesus. Share the Lord. Let the Word of God be in your mouth.

Do you know one of the blessings about being a preacher? The more of the Word of God I preach, the more of it sticks to me. There is a blessedness to what I'm doing right now. When I preach or share with you, it gets burned into me. That's kind of a trade secret. It's one of the benefits of being in the ministry: sharing the Word of God. Give it away.

B. The Word of God Is to Be in Your Mind

Let the Word of God be in your mouth, first of all. But, secondly, let the Word of God be in your mind. Look again in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night."* (Joshua 1:8)

I told you before, the idea of meditation is like humming. Have you ever gotten a tune in your head—you just find yourself humming it all day long? Well, that's what the Word of God is to be: not just read it and get it somehow in your notebook, in your journal, but get it down in your heart.

There's a joke. They say, you know, a college education is where that material that's in the professor's notebook gets in the student's notebook without going through the head of either one of them. Don't do that. Let the Word of God get down in your heart. You see, meditation is just thinking God's thoughts after Him. And when you do that, it has such incredible power. Now meditation is not just an empty mind with unguarded thoughts. Center in Christ. Get the Word of God.

I was talking today to Elizabeth Lane on the phone. And, Joyce, Elizabeth told me that she'd been doing what you talked to her about, about the Twenty-third Psalm, saying the Twenty-third Psalm over and over and meditating on it, and how transformational that has been. And what I try to do almost every night—I can't say I do it every night, but almost every night—is to take a verse of Scripture before I go to bed; let my last thought, last word, be a word from God; put that in my mind and go to sleep. And when I wake up in the morning, that will be in my mind. When I wake up in the middle of the night, that word of God is there in your heart. It's like a tune that you just keep humming, and it gets into your heart, into your being.

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C. The Word of God Is to Be in Your Manner of Life

Now the Word of God is to be in your mouth, be in your mind, and then it's to be in your manner of life. Notice as he continues to say—look in verse 8—why do you do this?" *"Meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein."* (Joshua 1:8) Now you cannot get the Word of God, have it in your mouth, and have it in your mind without it coming out in your manner of life. It just happens. Meditation leads us to the very door of success. Obedience is the key that opens the door. You can have the Word of God in your mouth and in your mind, and still you're just one step short. But when you begin to obey God, that door swings wide open; then you'll be prosperous. Jesus said, *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."* (John 14:21) Bible study is not just to scratch your intellectual itch. The real proof that you know God and love God is that you obey God.

Conclusion

All right, here we are on the threshold of a brand new year. We're, as it were, crossing Canaan, going into a new land. These are six principles. Take these verses New Year's Day. Better yet, take them on Sunday before New Year's Day, and read these eight verses. Think about these principles and say, "I am going to be that person. I know that God wants me to be victorious. God has a steadfast purpose. As He was with Moses and Joshua, He will be with me. There's a settled possession: God has given me victory. There's a sovereign power: God Almighty will help me." There is a sure promise. God says, "As I was with him, I'll be with you." There's a stalwart person. That person is you. You can choose that boldness; you can choose that obedience. And there's a stabilizing principle. Let the Word of God be in your mouth, in your mind, in your manner of living; and I promise you, you will be prosperous. I didn't say financially rich. *Prosperity is having all you need to do all God wants you to do.* That's all prosperity is: having all you need to do everything God wants you to do. And you will be prosperous.

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Conquering Canaan

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 13, 1985 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:1-9

"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel."
JOSHUA 1:2

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles. Turn, please, to Joshua chapter 1, and I know that we're going to be in and out of Joshua all of this year, perhaps, from time to time, because Joshua is the book of victory. And, the book of victory is the book that we need to be studying. God's object lesson for victorious living is found in the pages of the book of Joshua. I reminded you Wednesday night—and, by the way, this message is but a continuation of Wednesday night—that the land of Canaan represents the land of victory. And, we see here in the book of Joshua how Canaan was conquered, and we're going to be thinking tonight about Canaan conquest.

Now, clearly, clearly, victory is God's plan for every child of God. It is God's gift to every Christian. Now, I don't mean to say by that that every Christian is living in victory. It breaks my heart to say it: most Christians are not living in victory. But, if they're not living in victory, it is not because God has not given them victory; it is not because God does not want them to have victory. They are living beneath their privileges. The Bible admits the possibility of defeat, but it never assumes the necessity of defeat. As a

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matter of fact, to the contrary, the Bible says, *"Thanks be unto God, [who causes] us [always] to triumph"—"[always] to triumph"—"[through our Lord Jesus] Christ"* (2 Corinthians 2:14).

I begin in Joshua chapter 1:1: *"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise [and] go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given…you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. [And] there shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest"*—what an amazing statement—*"that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then [shalt] thou…make thy way prosperous, and then [shalt] thou…have good success. Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest"* (Joshua 1:1–9).

And, I want you to notice some Canaan concepts for conquest. I want you to see here what God told Joshua so long ago. And, you may say, "Pastor, that's what God told Joshua. That's not what God has told me." But, I remind you, as I did Wednesday night, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:11: *"Now all [of] these things happened [to] them for examples: and they are written for our admonition."* That is, this is a devotional study for those of us who want to conquer our Canaan. Now, I want to mention several things.

I. There Is a Possession to Possess

Principle number one: There is a possession to possess—there is a possession to possess. And, that is verses 1–4 (Joshua 1:1–4). Now, notice in verse 3 specifically: *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, [as I] have"*—excuse me; let me back up—*"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that [I] have…given unto you"* (Joshua 1:3). Now, notice He doesn't say, "That I will give unto you." He says,

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"[I] have…given [it] unto you" (Joshua 1:3). Every place, possess it—*"every place…that [I] have…given unto you"* (Joshua 1:3). Now, He's telling them to go possess the land. But, why does He tell them to possess the land when He says, "I've already given it to you"? There's a spiritual principle, and it's very clear and very plain right here: we need to learn how to possess our possessions. You say, "Pastor, that doesn't make sense." Well, it does make sense.

How many of you have books in your library you haven't read yet? Let me see your hand. It's almost all of us. Now, does that book belong to you or doesn't it belong to you? "Well," you say, "it belongs to me." But, you haven't read it. You don't know what's in it; you haven't enjoyed it. The truth of it has not entered into your heart and mind. It is yours, but you've not laid hold of it. You have not possessed your possessions.

Now, God has given you victory, and you have victory; but you may not be living in victory. That's not contradictory. Victory is the ascension gift of our risen Lord to every blood-bought child of God, to every one of us. But, you may not be living in victory. Why? Not because you don't have victory—you have victory—but you have not possessed your possessions. And, and, how tragic that is! I don't mean that you're not going to heaven. You may go to heaven, but you're going to heaven second-class.

Years and years ago, my mother told me a story, when I was a little boy, about a man who was coming from the old world to the new world. And, he saved up enough money to become a passenger on an ocean liner. Now, he knew that he needed to be very careful with his money; and so, he took with him a supply of cheese and crackers, and that was his fare every day on that ship. And, while others would go into the dining room to eat upon that ship, he would get off in a little corner, and open and unwrap his cheese, and unwrap his crackers, and have his little meal of cheese and crackers and water. And, the first several days, that was fine. But then, the aroma of that food came wafting its way out of the dining hall, and he saw those people coming out looking so sleek and well fed. And, he thought, "Well, perhaps I could spend just a little bit and have one meal there from that sumptuous dining room." So, he went to one of the stewards, and he said, "How much would it cost me to purchase a meal here in the dining room?" The man said, "Let me see your ticket," and he showed him the ticket. He said, "Well, sir, all of your meals are taken care of with this ticket." Now, what a shame! What a tragedy! Here was a man feasting on cheese and crackers—or shall I say sustaining himself on cheese and crackers?—while others were there in the dining room feasting at the sumptuous meal. And, so it is with some Christians here in our building tonight: all of you have a ticket for glory that includes a spiritual banquet, and all of you, dear friend, have victory as the legacy of our living, risen, ascended Lord. But, many have not possessed your possessions.

Now, God said to Joshua, "Joshua, go in to the land and take it"—*"[and] every place*

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that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given…you" (Joshua 1:3)—"I'm not—I'm not—promising to give it to you; I've already given it to you." But, the victorious life, friend, is nothing more, nothing less than walking on conquered ground—just putting the foot of faith upon the promise of God and saying, "This blessing is mine." Victory does not come by trying; it comes by trusting. So, that's principle number one in Canaan conquest: there is a possession to possess.

II. There Is a Promise to Plead

Principle number two: There is a promise to plead. Look, if you will now, in verse 5—here's the promise: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them"* (Joshua 1:5–6). Now, notice what the promise that we plead is.

A. The Promise of a Conquering Power

First of all, it's the promise of a conquering power. Look again in verse 5, verse 1…or chapter 1:5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life"* (Joshua 1:5). That is, who can stop the work of God? Who can oppose the child of God who's in the will of God? No one can stand against a child of God and overcome a child of God. It's impossible when that child of God is obeying the Lord and walking in the Holy Spirit. He may die, as Debbie said, a martyr's death, but that does not mean that the work of God has stopped or that was not God's plan for that saint at that particular time, because the Bible teaches it is an honor and a glory to die for our Lord. That's not a tragedy; that's not a failure. That, my friend, is perhaps the greatest victory that anyone can know. But, what I'm trying to say is that there's absolutely, totally no one or no thing that can stand against a child of God and hinder the work of God if we're walking in the Spirit. *"[For] if God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31). *"Greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4).

Now, let me give you a New Testament verse. You say, "That's Old Testament." All right, put in your margin "Romans 8:37": Paul mentions all of the enemies that can come against the child of God, and then he says, *"In all [of] these things"*—listen to it—*"we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* Now, it doesn't mean that we're just conquerors; we are supra-conquerors. It doesn't mean that we're going to win the last three seconds with a field goal; it means, dear friend, that there's no one, no power, no thing that can stand against the child of God who is walking in the Spirit. *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). God has promised a conquering power.

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B. The Promise of a Constant Presence

And, to go with that conquering power is a constant presence. Look again in verse 5—the last part: *"as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee"* (Joshua 1:5). I never shall forget the first time this text here really rang in my heart and in my soul, along with the Great Commission: *"Go [and make disciples]…and, lo, I am with you"* (Matthew 28:19–20).

When I was a youngster, and I'd not had any experience witnessing and testifying for the Lord, my church got me to go out door to door to take a survey. I was not trained. I had no spiritual background much. And really, I don't think they had any business sending me out. But, they sent me out, and I tell you, I was green as a gourd. But, I knew enough of the Bible to say, "Lord, you said go and you'd go with me." And, I can remember that it seemed that the Lord was never nearer nor more precious to this young, immature, bubbling, stumbling, young teenage boy as I was going from door to door in the name of Jesus. And, I kept saying, "Lord, 'if,' you'd said, 'I'd go,' you'd go with me." And, the Lord and I had such sweet presence and such sweet fellowship as we walked hand in hand, side by side, to those various doors. And, I believe I grew a foot spiritually just by being pushed out there where I had to depend upon the Lord.

Now, the Lord says, *"Go…and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matthew 28:20). There is this promise of a constant presence, and I want to say, dear friend, the time cannot erode these promises away. God made the promise to Moses, and now He renews the promise to Joshua. Notice what He says: *"as I was with Moses, so…will [I] be with [you]"* (Joshua 1:5).

Now, I want to ask you a question: Do you ever get the idea, when you read the Bible, that these times were special, and that these were special people, and that God did things for them that He won't do for us? No, to the contrary, as God would say to me, "Now Adrian, as I was with Moses, so I was with Joshua. And, as I was with Joshua, so, Adrian, I will be with you." Now, we need to understand that God is the same. He doesn't change. *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness [continues throughout] all generations"* (Psalm 119:89–90)—"As I was with this generation, I'll be with that generation." And, the same God—listen to me, ladies and gentlemen; listen to me, brothers and sisters in Christ—the same God that led Joshua into Canaan so long ago is the same God that's going to lead Bellevue into her kingdom. Do you believe that? I do. *"As I was with Moses, so…will [I] be with [you]"* (Joshua 1:5). There is a conquering power. There is a continuing presence. These promises in the Bible are not relics to be put in a museum; they're checks to be carried to a bank.

Let me give you one of the great, great scriptures that tells of the presence of God and the promise of God with His people: Hebrews 13:5. I want to copy it—I want to read

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it to you—from the Amplified Bible. I have in my library a copy of God's Word that is called the "Amplified New Testament," and what it does—it just takes the Word of God and seems to squeeze all of the juice out of every Greek word just to amplify it, to get the full meaning. Now, let me read it from the Amplified New Testament, because it is tremendously beautiful: *"For He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let you down (relax My hold [upon] you! [Assuredly not!]"* Don't you like that? Let me give it to you again. I'm talking now about God's presence with His people. Now listen—Hebrews 13:5: *"For He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without [any] support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold [upon] you)! [Assuredly not!]"* Oh, dear friend, what more could He say to you than He hath said.

Listen, God is with His people. What a thrill to know that the dear Savior, as I preached tonight, stands in this pulpit. And, His presence, and His love, and His power is with me right now that inspires me, and energizes me, and invigorates me to preach the Word of God. A dear, loving Savior walked through that door with me. And, dear friend, God says, "As I was with Moses, I'll be with Joshua. And, as I was with Joshua, I'll be with Adrian. And, as I'm with Adrian, I will be with all of the saints here at Bellevue Baptist Church." There is a possession to possess. There is, my dear friend, a promise to plead. It is a promise of a conquering power. It is a promise of a constant presence.

C. The Promise of a Continuing Possession

It is a promise of a continuing possession. Look again in verse 6: *"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them"* (Joshua 1:6). That is, the possession is still there. Now, what He is saying to Joshua is, "Your fathers blew it. They could have had it. Those other people before you, Joshua—those who, at Kadeshbarnea, turned back to the comparative safety of the sandy desert—they could have had it, but they didn't have it. But, the possession is still there, and all you need to do is to go in and possess your possessions." It is a continuing possession.

Now, that tells me something else: if we're not careful, we'll get our eyes upon the failures of others rather than on the promises of God. Don't look at other Christians. Other Christians (most of them) are not living up to the promises of God's Word. I think it was Leonard Ravenhill who said, "One of these days somebody's going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves." Now, others perhaps have failed to go in. God said, "I would have given that land to your fathers. They blew it. But Joshua, it makes no difference. There is—there is,

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Joshua—a constant presence. There is a conquering power. There is a continuing possession. The land that I sware to give to your fathers—that promise is still there. The land is still there. And, get your eyes off of everybody else." Friend, I want to tell you, an average Christian is not a normal Christian. A normal Christian is one who is living in victory, but the average Christian doesn't. And, never make the mistake of confusing the average Christian with a normal Christian. Sometimes we see a person living in victory and we think, "Hey, boy, that's a super edition of a Christian!" It is not! That is God's plan for every Christian. We are to live in victory. And so, there is a continuing possession.

III. There Is a Person to Prepare

Now, the third thing… First thing I said: There is a possession to possess. Second thing: There is a promise to plead. Third thing: There is a person to prepare. Now, here's where the water hits the wheel. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *"Only"*—now, here it's just not all automatic—*"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand [nor] to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest"* (Joshua 1:7). Now, here is the person to prepare. The Lord says to Joshua, "Joshua, there's a qualification." Now, a while back, I told you that it all depended upon God. Now, I want to tell you that it all depends upon you. There's no contradiction. Dear friend, listen: Do you know what victory is? Victory does not root in your ability—listen to me—*victory is not your responsibility, but victory is your response to His ability.*

Now, what I mean by that is this: that God said, "Here it is. Here it is, Joshua. It's all yours. I'm with you. There's the promise of a conquering power. There's the promise of a continuing presence, a constant presence. There is the promise of a continuing possession. It's all there. Only, now, Joshua, be strong. Be of a good courage. Don't turn from the right. Don't turn to the left." You said, "I knew there was a hitch. I'm just not that courageous, Pastor. I really just don't have what it takes." Well, learn one of the greatest secrets you can ever learn tonight: that *every command of God is the promise of God.* Behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command. But, we must choose. There were three things that Joshua needed. He needed strength: *"Be…strong"* (Joshua 1:7). He needed boldness: *"Be…courageous"* (Joshua 1:7). He needed obedience: *"Observe to do"* (Joshua 1:7). Those three things that I need tonight—I need strength; I need courage; I need obedience. And, God requires that of me; God demands that of me. But, everything that God requires and everything that God demands God supplies. *"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things"* (Romans 11:36). *"It is God [that] worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13).

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Did you know—did you know—that we people can choose strength? Did you know that? Did you know that cowards can choose courage? And, did you know that failing people can literally choose obedience? Can you know that you can come to the Lord and say, "God, you've told me to be strong, so I choose to be strong"? Did you know that you can say, "Lord, you told me to have courage, so now I choose to have courage"? And, everything that God demands of you God supplies for you. There is a person to prepare. And, if you refuse to choose, and to claim, and to lay hold of the courage that God wants to give you tonight, then you're not going to enter in. *"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"* (Ephesians 6:10).

IV. There Is a Plan to Pursue

Fourthly, not only is there a person to prepare; there is a plan to pursue. Now, follow the outline: a possession to possess, a promise to plead, a person to prepare, and there is a plan to pursue. What is the plan that we're to pursue? There it is in verse 8—here it is: *"[And] this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth"—"thy mouth"—"but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"* (Joshua 1:8). Now, what is this plan? I'll mention it very quickly, and we'll be finished.

A. We Are to Proclaim the Word of God

First of all, we are to proclaim the Word of God. Look in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth"* (Joshua 1:8). Constantly and constantly, we are to be quoting the Word of God. There's tremendous power in putting the Word of God in your mouth. It gives you boldness. It gives you courage. It gives you faith as you say the Word of God. That's the reason that we're going to learn 12 victory verses this year. That's the reason I'm hoping that all day tomorrow you'll be going around saying and singing Romans 11:36: *"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be [the] glory for ever. Amen."* And, as that Word of God goes over and over and over again, it'll be in your mouth. And, as you say it, God will burn it into your heart and into your consciousness. And, not only will it do you good, but it will bless those round about you as you share the Word of God.

Do you know the man that wrote **PILGRIM'S PROGRESS**, John Bunyan? Do you know how John Bunyan got saved? John Bunyan was converted and won to Jesus Christ by listening to a conversation between two Christian women as they were talking together about the Word of God. If someone were to eavesdrop on your conversation, would it cause them to want to be a child of God? Is the Word of God in your mouth? We are to be quoting it. We are to be singing it. We're to be sharing it. We're to be preaching it.

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We're to be telling it everywhere we go. We will not have victory unless the Word of God is upon our lips and in our mouths. So, number one: We are to proclaim the Word of God.

B. We Are to Ponder the Word of God

Number two: We are to ponder the Word of God. Look again in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth"*—that is, "proclaim it"—*"but thou shalt meditate therein day and night"* (Joshua 1:8). We're to ponder it. Not only is it to be in my mouth, but, as I continue to speak it, it now gets down into my heart, and I begin to ponder and meditate on the Word of God. The word *meditate* has two ideas.

Number one: It refers to the idea of the chewing of the cud, as a cow goes out into the field and loads up on clover and Alfalfa and then lies down under the shade of a tree. And, that Alfalfa and clover or Bahia grass is down in the tummy of that cow. And, the cow gets to thinking about that grass, and the cow says, "Alfalfa please," and up comes Alfalfa. And, the cow chews that Alfalfa for a while and then sends that back down and says, "Clover please," and up comes the clover. And, the cow chews that clover, and it goes back down. "Bahia grass, please," and up that comes. And, and, and, what is that cow doing? It… Well, we call that "chewing the cud." The cow has ingested it. It was, for a while, in the cow's mouth, but now it is inside the cow. And, the cow is chewing the cud. The cow is doing something very similar to meditating. We take the Word of God in, and we ingest the Word of God. But then, all through the day the Word of God just comes to us, and we taste it, and chew it, and meditate on it.

Every night before I go to sleep—almost every night—I would say… I go to sleep with a verse of Scripture in my mind, and I go over and over that verse of Scripture. I said, "What does that verse of Scripture mean?" And, I think, and I try to say, "Lord, give me some new thought on that particular scripture," and I go to sleep almost every night with the Word of God in my mind. Day by day, as I'm walking around, God's Word will just come to me, and that's the way it ought to be.

The other idea of meditation is the idea of humming. Have you ever gotten a little tune in your mind, and all day long you're just humming a little tune? And, that's one of the things I think we need to teach our people to do is to sing in church songs that are easily remembered. Now, I love the great anthems—and there's a place for the great anthems—but it's hard to hum them. Now, what we need—what we need—are those kinds of songs like *"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be the glory for ever. Amen"* (Romans 11:36), and you just had that going through your mind and going through your heart and going through your mind.

And, that's what God is saying to Joshua. Number one: You are to proclaim the Word of God; speak it boldly. He hath said that we may boldly say. Number two: You

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are to ponder the Word of God. You are to meditate in the Word of God every night, every day. Listen, when you meditate in God's Word, do you know what you're doing? You are thinking God's thoughts after Him. And, before long, you're going to have wisdom far beyond your own, because the secret of having God's wisdom is to think God's thoughts after Him.

C. We Are to Practice the Word of God

Now, the third thing in the plan to pursue is this: you are to proclaim the Word; you are to ponder the Word, but you're not finished yet—you are to practice the Word of God. Look again in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth"*—that is, "proclaim it"—*"thou shalt meditate therein day and night"*—ponder it. Now, notice—*"that thou mayest observe to do…all that is written therein"* (Joshua 1:8)—practice it. The reason that you proclaim it and the reason that you ponder it is that you may practice the Word of God. Reading, memorizing, meditating—all of these things will give you knowledge about God. But, I want to tell you something. I told you this several months ago, but I want to tell you again. It's one of the greatest truths I've ever learned: you will never know God by studying the Bible; you will know God by obeying the Bible. Studying the Bible will give you knowledge about God; obeying the Bible will give you knowledge of God. Now, do you want knowledge about God or do you want to know God? Dear friend, knowing about God has never saved anybody, helped anybody, or blessed anybody. It is knowing God. And, if you want to know God, you're going to have to obey this book. And, the problem is that many study the Bible, and many learn the Bible, and many memorize the Bible—but they do not obey the Bible. And, therefore, they do not know God.

Let me prove what I'm talking about. Let me give you the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in John 14:21. Listen to what Jesus said: Jesus said, *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them"*—notice not just *has* them, but *keeps* them; that means "obeys" them—*"he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him"*—now, watch it—*"and will manifest myself to him"* (John 14:21). To whom is it that Jesus makes Himself known? To whom is it that Jesus manifests Himself? To the one who has His commandments? No! To the one who has His commandments and keeps them. The reason to proclaim the Word and the reason to ponder the Word is that we might practice the Word. And, when we practice the Word, then we begin to live in victory. Have I now… Listen again: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do…all that is written therein: for then"*—and may I say only then—*"thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and [thy] shalt have good success"* (Joshua 1:8). Meditation leads to the door of success; obedience is the key that unlocks

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that door. Bible knowledge is not given to satisfy your intellectual curiosity or to scratch your intellectual itch. The real proof as to whether or not you believe the Bible is whether or not you obey the Word of God. The rest is just religious talk.

Conclusion

Now, dear friend, I believe that these are Canaan concepts for conquest. Number one: There is a possession to possess. Number two: There is a promise to plead. God will keep His Word. Number three: There is a person to prepare. I must be strong and of good courage. I must obey. Number four: There is a plan to pursue. I must proclaim the Word. I must ponder the Word. I must practice the Word. And, the Bible tells us clearly and plainly that we are going to be victorious—verse 9: *"Have [I] not…commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest"* (Joshua 1:9).

I want every head bowed and every eye closed. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want to ask you tonight, are you ready to possess your possessions? Wednesday night many stood and said, "Pastor, I'm tired of living in the desert. I'm stepping over into Canaan in the land of milk and honey. I want victory. I don't care how many giants are in the land. If God be for me, who can be against me?" And, I'm wondering tonight if there are some of you who are like that man aboard that ship—you're saved, but you're eating cheese and crackers rather than feasting at the Captain's table. I wonder, why don't you say tonight, "O God, burn this scripture into my heart and into my mind. Help me, Lord, to learn these principles of conquest. Help me, God, to be a victorious Christian. Help me to possess my possessions"?

Let me talk to those of you who are unsaved tonight. May I tell you that salvation is yours? You say, "Well, I'm not saved." That's right, but salvation is yours. All you have to do is to possess your possessions. Jesus has already died for you. He died for the sins of the whole world. Potentially, in Christ, your sin is already forgiven, but it will never be yours until you say, "Lord, I put the foot of faith upon the promise of God, and I claim that promise tonight. Lord, I trust you. I trust you to save me."

Father, I'm praying tonight that many who are Christians will claim victory and many who are lost will come to Jesus. In His dear name I pray. Amen.

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God's Plan for Your Prosperity

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 12, 1980 Time: 1800

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:1–9

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.
JOSHUA 1:8

Outline

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II. There Is a Promise to Plead
  A. A Conquering Power
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  C. A Continuing Possession
III. There Is a Person to Prepare
IV. There Is a Plan to Pursue
  A. We Are to Proclaim the Word of God
  B. We Are to Ponder the Word of God
  C. We Are to Practice the Word of God
Conclusion

Introduction

How would you like to be prosperous? Would you like to be prosperous? All right, we're going to tell you how to be prosperous. And I'm not kidding or just using words loosely or lightly; I'll guarantee you tonight that I'm going to show you how you can be prosperous. I mean it. You can be prosperous; you can prosper. God wants you to prosper. God's plan is for you to prosper. And if you'll pay attention, you're going to find out God's plan for your prosperity. And that's what we're talking about tonight: "God's Plan for Your Prosperity."

And I want you to turn to the Book of Joshua in the Old Testament, and look with me in chapter 1 of the Book of Joshua—Joshua chapter 1. And we're going to share together the first nine verses. Oh, bring your Bibles—bring your Bibles to church. I just believe you'll get at least 30% more out of any message—really, literally, actually, 30% more out of any message—if you'll keep an open Bible in front of you. All right now, in Joshua chapter 1, verse 1: *"Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the LORD it*

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came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest…"—now of course you've found the key verse—*"that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest"* (Joshua 1:1–9).

And I want to remind you that what God said to Joshua in the Old Testament has a definite application to you. This is not what God has said; it is what God is saying. For the Bible tells us in Corinthians all these things happened to them for examples to us (1 Corinthians 10:11). So this is more than history, dear friend; this is devotional literature. And I want to tell you tonight how that you can prosper and have good success.

Now some of you may think that it's not God's will that you prosper. Some of you may think that if you're a Christian that you're supposed to live a life of defeat, because that somehow shows your humility as a Christian. No, dear friend, I want to show you beyond a shadow of any doubt or peradventure whatsoever it is definitely, absolutely God's plan for you to prosper.

Now just put your bookmark there in Joshua chapter 1, as I am doing, lick your fingers, and let's look at some other verses for just a moment as we're thinking just by means of introduction about the desirability of prosperity. Turn, for example, to Psalm chapter 1. Psalms is right in the middle of your Bible, not to hard to find the first chapter—Psalm chapter 1. Most of us know it by heart. But listen to it: *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD…"*—there's the same thing that God told Joshua so long ago—*"But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."* And now I want you to

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listen to God's promise to this man: *"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither…"*—O God, forgive these dried up Christians, these wither-leafed Christians—*"his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"* (Psalm 1:1–3).

Now Adrian Rogers didn't say that; God said that. And that's plain black ink on white paper. Either you believe it or you don't. *"Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."* All right, let's turn to Psalm 35, verse 27: *"Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause; yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant"* (Psalm 35:27). God just takes pleasure when you prosper. "Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."

All right, turn back now to 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 20—2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 20—all right, the last part of verse 20: *"Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper"* (2 Chronicles 20:20). There again God has said the same thing.

Now turn to Nehemiah, if you will; just turn right there for a moment to Nehemiah chapter 2 and verse 20. This is what Nehemiah said: *"Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us…"*—isn't that a wonderful promise?—*"The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build"* (Nehemiah 2:20)—because God, you see, wants to prosper His people.

Now since we've had that little trip through the Bible, just go back again and look in Joshua 1:8 that we mentioned just a moment ago: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do…all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."*

Now there's a theme that runs through the Bible, and the theme that runs through the Bible is this: that God desires for His people to prosper. God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. But now I want to give you one from the New Testament. And though it doesn't use the word *prosperity*, I want you to see that it's talking about prosperity. Turn to the Book of Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 20—Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 20—what a marvelous, marvelous verse this one is: *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"* (Ephesians 3:20–21).

Now this is why you can prosper. Look at this verse. It says that God is able to do all that we ask. But wait a minute. God is more than able to do all that we can ask. The Bible says that God is able to do all that we can ask or think. Amen? You just let your

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mind just turn it loose, and just let it go and start thinking; everything you can think, God is able to do. But now wait a minute. Not only is God able to do all that we ask, and not only is God able to do all that ask or think; but look: God is able to do above all that we ask or think. But wait a minute. God is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think. But wait a minute. God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. Pretty great God, amen?

So listen. This is the God, the great God, the magnificent God, who delights in the prosperity of His servants, and we ought not to be pessimists. I tell you these pessimistic Christians are an insult to God. Andrew Blackwood said, "After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is not one pessimistic note in all the New Testament." That's interesting, isn't it? Not one pessimistic note is found in the entire New Testament after the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I like what Ethel Waters said. Do you know Ethel Waters, the black musician, the gospel singer? Somebody asked her about some failure; they were talking about some failure that might happen, and some sort of a crusade or something she was in. She said, "Honey, there ain't going to be no failure, for God don't sponsor no flops." Amen? "God don't sponsor no flops." That's just another way of saying that when God is in it, God wants His people to prosper.

Now right away, your mind is just going around and around and around. You're saying, "Well now, wait a minute. What about all the people who love God and are not rich?" Friend, I'm not talking about being rich; I'm not talking about money in the bank. You see, that's the trouble with Americans. When you get to talking about prosperity, what do they think of? Dollars and cents. They think about their bank account. They think about their clothes, their cars, their finery. And they call that prosperity.

I want to tell you what the definition of prosperity is, and what the definition of prosperity is not. Prosperity is not necessarily a lot of money in the bank. You can have all of that and be a dismal failure. For Jesus said, "What should it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what should a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). You can have much in your purse and nothing in your person. Prosperity is not necessarily money.

Now the Bible is not against your having money. If you've got it, fine, wonderful. I want you to up your gift to "VIV." That's fine, if you've got it. Hot dog, I'm glad you do. Give it to the Lord, use it; and by the way, don't leave it in your will; just give it now. "Do your giving while you're living, then you're knowing where it's going." And you can get excited about it, and you can have the joy of giving it right now. There's nothing wrong with having money, but dear friend, God gave it to you not to hoard away, not to squirrel away, but to use for His glory, and to get the joy of giving it for Him. But materialism is not prosperity; having money is not necessarily prosperity.

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You say, “Well then, prosperity is freedom from pain, freedom from problems, and freedom from trouble. If I just never have any more pain, and never have any more trouble, never have any more difficulty, then I’ll be prosperous.” Not according to the Bible definition of prosperity. As a matter of fact, God wants you to have some pain. God wants you to have some trouble. God wants you to have some difficulty.

Do you remember there in the Garden of Eden when God came to Adam and Eve after they’d sinned, and God, in mercy—not in judgment, but God in mercy—said to them, “Cursed is the ground,” and then He said, “for your sake”—“for your sake.” “I am giving you a blessing when I’m going to put a curse on the ground.” “Thistles shall it bring forth to you.” “From the sweat of your face you’re going to earn your keep” (Genesis 3:17–19). Why? Well, the worst thing that could happen to sinful people would be to have sinful natures and to live in a world that is in rebellion against God and never know any difficulty and never know any pain. Pain is God’s good gift.

I was reading a while back about a little girl. Her name is Beverly Smith. She was born in Akron, Ohio, and there was something wrong with her central nervous system, and she couldn’t feel any pain. Her parents didn’t at first realize it, but then they finally noticed that the only time Beverly cried was when she was hungry or when she was angry; that she could not feel pain. And they had a difficulty with her. She could step on a nail and not know it. She could have some terrible infection or disease in her body and not feel that particular pain. Can you imagine raising a little girl like that? What good would it do to give her a spanking?

That would be a terrible thing if God couldn’t spank you, wouldn’t it? You see, “Whom the Lord loves He chastens” (Hebrews 12:6). What I’m just trying to say to you is that prosperity is not necessarily a lot of money in the bank, nor is prosperity the ability not to feel any pain, not to have any troubles, just to sail through life with no difficulties whatever. The Lord Jesus was *“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”* (Isaiah 53:3). And every great saint of God has known difficulties and trials and tribulations. These things are common to us all. And yet God says that we’re all to prosper. *“Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*

Are you ready now for a definition of what prosperity is—real prosperity? Let me tell you what prosperity is. It’s so simple. Prosperity is the progressive realization of God-given goals. That’s what prosperity is: the progressive realization of God-given goals. To find out what God wants you to do, to find out what God wants you to be, to find out what God wants you to have, and to do it, and be it, and have it, and to be progressively realizing those goals; ladies and gentleman, that is prosperity. And that prosperity is illustrated by God’s people conquering Canaan, for Canaan is a type and a picture of the Spirit-filled life.

Now go back to Joshua chapter 1, and keep in mind that prosperity is the

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progressive realization of God-given goals. And when those God-given goals are progressively realized, you have a tremendous fulfillment. You have a fulfillment that nothing else can give, to know that you're in the will of God, that you have a God-given goal. There is a purpose for your life, and day by day when that God-given goal is being progressively realized in your life, then you can say, "Thank God, who has pleasure in the prosperity in His servant."

Now let me just talk to you about this land of prosperity that is symbolized by Canaan, because Joshua is getting ready to conquer Canaan. He's getting ready to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. As I've told you before, Canaan does not represent heaven; Canaan is a type, a picture, a prophecy of the victorious Christian life. God wants you to live in victory, and prosperity and victory is the gift of God to every Christian. I want to say that again. Prosperity and victory is the gift of God to every Christian.

Now not every Christian has prosperity, and not ever Christian has victory. But God has given it. The reason that some don't have it is that they have not possessed their possessions. They are living beneath their privileges. And so you see, *while the* Bible admits *the* possibility *of* defeat*, it never* assumes *the* necessity *of defeat*. Now let me say that again: While the Bible admits the possibility of defeat, it never assumes the necessity of defeat. God assumes that you're going to have victory. The Bible says, "Thanks be unto to God who causes us always to triumph in the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Now having said that, I want to say four things about being prosperous. Here's God's plan for your prosperity.

I. There Is a Possession to Possess

First of all, you need to realize there is a possession to possess. There is a land of victory that is yours. Look again in the first four verses: *"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan,"*—that is the river Jordan—*"thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you…"*—notice He doesn't say "that will I give you"; "I already gave it to you; now go in and possess your possessions"—*"that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast."*

Now this is the land of victory. As they were to go in and conquer this land, as they were to progressively appropriate their God-given goals, they would be prosperous.

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Now God has a promised land for you. God has a land of Spirit-fullness, and God has a land of victory for you. And that is the land of victory in Christ. And there is, dear friend, a possession to possess. Now the life of victory and the life of prosperity for a Christian is just simply walking about on conquered ground. It's living in your Canaan.

II. There Is a Promise to Plead

And so I want to tell you that there is definitely a possession to possess; but secondly, not only is there a possession to possess, but there is a promise to plead. Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6 that follow. Here's the promise. First, He told them of the possession. He said, "I'm going to give you all of this." Now remember, it symbolizes your victory; it symbolizes your rest in the Lord Jesus Christ; it symbolizes all of the fullness of God. That's what Canaan symbolizes.

And then, along with possession, He gave a promise. Listen to the promise—verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them."* What kind of a promise was it?

A. A Conquering Power

First of all, it was a promise of a conquering power. Look at it. "Nobody is going to be able to stand against you. You're going to be victorious. There is going to be in your life the power to do all that God asks you to do." And let me tell you something: If you've not learned this in reading the Bible, you've missed one of the greatest lessons in understanding tile Bible. Every command of God is a promise from God. Whether you see a promise there or not, anything that God commands you to do God enables you to do. See? Here God gave them a command—"possess the land"—and right along with the command, right on the heels of that command, God gives them a promise. And He says, "You are going to have a conquering power. There is no man who's able to stand against you."

Now let me give you a New Testament verse to match this Old Testament verse. It is Romans chapter 8 and verse 37, that says, *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Romans 8:37). Do you know what that word "more than conquerors" means? It means "super-conquerors."

Now so many of us get the idea we're just supposed to squeak out with a victory. In other words, like we're in the football game, and we win the football game, the last three seconds with a field goal, and we win 17 to 14. No, that's not what God is talking about here. He's talking about the Christians, 100, the Lions, nothing.

Man, He is saying, we are more than conquerors; not just that we won, not just that

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we squeak through with a victory. Brother, the devil is vanquished, and the devil is defeated, and God's people are to be victorious. That is prosperity.

B. **A Constant Presence**

Dear friend, there is to be a conquering power. But look at verse 5 again. Verse 5 speaks not only of a conquering power, but of a constant presence. Look at it: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life:"*—that's the conquering power—*"as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."* That is the constant presence of the Lord. You see, the promises of God didn't die when Moses died: *"I was with Moses."* And the same God who was alive when Moses was alive is still alive. And I want to tell you, the same God that was alive when Joshua was alive is still alive. And if God were here today, He would say, "As I was with Joshua, so will I be with you." Oh, you see, dear friend, there is that constant presence of the Lord.

One of my favorite verses is Hebrews 13, verse 5. Now very few, if any, of you—if any—have tonight what we call *The Amplified Bible*. Do any of you have one at home? Let me see. *The Amplified*—yeah, quite a few of us, really good. It's kind of tedious to read, because it keeps amplifying every word. But I tell you one verse that I love to read. Now remember, we're talking about the constant presence of the Lord. One verse that I love to read in *The Amplified Bible*—and I've copied it out and brought it here tonight to read to you—is Hebrews chapter 13, verse 5. I want you to listen to it in *The Amplified New Testament*: "For He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]" (Hebrews 13:5). Amen? Isn't that wonderful? God is just saying, "Friend, look, I'm going to be with you." Hallelujah, that's prosperity! When you know a conquering power and a continuing presence, that is prosperity.

And I remember hearing somewhere about a young man just graduated from seminary, who went out to a country church. You know, in this passage in the New Testament, it says, "I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee"—that's what it says, and it's just be expanded this way in *The Amplified Bible*; not adding to the Word of God, but just throwing all of the meat out. And this young seminary student was telling this old lady that in the Greek God didn't just say it one time, but as a triple negative: "I will not, I will not, I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee." And the old lady, who Had been walking with the Lord a long time, just smiled and said to young man, "God may have to say it three times for you Greek fellows, but once is enough for me."

I want to tell you that God will not leave us. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you."

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C. A Continuing Possession

But now look. Not only is there that conquering power, and that constant presence, but there is a continuing possession. Look again in verse 6. He says, "*Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them."*

Now what He's saying is this: "Look, I said I was going to give it to your fathers. They fooled around out there in the wilderness, and they never got it. But my promise is still just as true today as it was then." It's still there; there is a continuing possession. Do you know what the Israelites could have done at this point? They could have looked back over their shoulder at that group of Israelis that died in the wilderness, and they could have said, "Well, you know, that's the way you're supposed to do it. That's the way that everybody lives. Nobody really goes into Canaan."

Friend, do you know the real danger? That when you become a Christian, rather than you appropriating the promises of this book, you're going to look around at the rest of us and say, "I guess I'll be like them." Boy, I tell you it's not a real comforting thought to think that the average convert is going to become like the average member. Did you know that? Oh, somebody said that the average church is so backslidden that when you join you have to backslide to be in fellowship. I hope that's not true about you. Sometimes, you know, these people get saved and they're on fire for the Lord, and you put them in a church—an old, cold, dead church—it's like putting hot coals on cracked ice.

Oh friend, listen. God promised something to the fathers, and they did not appropriate it. But God's promise was still true, whether the fathers had appropriated it or not. Listen to what God says in verse 6: *"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them."* Now their fathers never had it. Their fathers died in the wilderness. Don't you look around and measure your life by everybody else. Leonard Ravenhill said, "One of these days, somebody is going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves." Amen?

Now look. There is, according to the Word of God, a conquering power, a constant presence, and a continuing possession. That is the promise that we plead. This is the promise that God made to Joshua so long ago. And that promise, spiritually, is good for us today.

III. There Is a Person to Prepare

Now the next thing I want you to see: there's also a person to prepare. Look in verse 7: *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant, commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand*

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or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest."

Now not only was there a promise to plead, but there was also a person to prepare. God said to Joshua, "Now Joshua, you'd better prepare."

I heard about a boy who was in college in one of these high-priced colleges, and he was failing, and as a matter of fact, he just had to leave school with failing grades. And he wrote home and told his mother, he said, "Mother, I have failed in school, and I'm coming home. Prepare Dad." She wrote back and she said, "Dad is prepared. Prepare yourself."

Now I want you to understand that if you're going to go into this promised land there is a person to prepare. Now on the one hand, you look in verses 4 through 5, it looks like it all depends on God. God says, "I'll go with you, and I'll be with you, and no man will be able to stand against you." And then, when you look in verse 7, it looks like it all depends upon Joshua. Well, there's no contradiction here, but God is not going to do it without you, and without your cooperation.

Now, God does it; it is God's power, but it is God's power for people who will claim His victory. You see, there were three things that he needed. He needed strength—"be thou strong"; he needed boldness—"be thou courageous"; he needed obedience—"and observe to do all that thy commands you." And dear friend, those are the three things you'll need if you want to be prosperous. You need strength, you need courage, and you need obedience. You say, "Those are the three things I don't have." Where are you going to get them?

Well, here's the wonderful thing. Remember what I said: Every command of God is a promise from God, and all that God demands from you God supplies for you. Learn that now: Everything that God demands from you God supplies for you. But you must want it, and you must choose it. Weak people can choose strength, fearful people can choose courage, and disobedient people can choose obedience. Are you willing to choose obedience? Are you willing to choose strength, even though you're weak? To prepare yourself by faith, because every command of God is a promise of God?

IV. There Is a Plan to Pursue

But now let's get right down to the very heart of the matter: not only is there a possession to possess, not only is there a promise to plead, not only is the a person to prepare, but dear friend, there is a plan to pursue if you want success, and that plan to pursue begins in verse 8. Now look at it. Here's the way to be prosperous; here's the way to have success—not Adrian's way, not Dale Carnegie's way—God's way: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth…"*—and incidentally, I hope you've been realizing I've been preaching on the Bible for a little while now; last Sunday, this Sunday morning, and tonight. I want you to see that victory is in the Word of God—

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"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Now here is the plan to pursue—are you ready for it?

A. **We Are to Proclaim the Word of God**

First of all, we are to proclaim the Word of God. Look at it again in verse 8: *"This book of the law shalt not depart out of thy mouth."* That is, you are to be speaking the Word of God. Now let's give you a New Testament verse for that—Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 29: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"* (Ephesians 4:29). The Word of God is to be in your mouth; you're to be speaking the Word of God.

Friend, there is tremendous power in the spoken Word of God. Learn to take the Word of God and use it, speak it, claim it. We are to proclaim the Word of God.

John Bunyan, one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, was converted, and let me tell you how he was converted. He was converted as he was hearing a conversation among several women. These women so loved God, and as they were talking about the Lord Jesus, and sharing the Word of God, just overhearing it brought conviction to his heart, and John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, was converted.

Say, how many people would be saved by listening to your conversation? I mean, if they were to eavesdrop on your conversation, would they want to be a Christian?

B. **We Are to Ponder the Word of God**

You see, we are to proclaim the Word of God. But wait a minute. Not only are we to proclaim the Word of God, verse 8; we are to ponder the Word of God. Look at it again: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth;"*—that is, you shall proclaim it—*"but thou shalt meditate therein day and night."* And you can't proclaim it until first of all you have pondered it. That is, you are to meditate on the Word of God.

Do you know what the word *meditate* means? It has two ideas. One, it has the idea of a cow chewing a cud.

Now being an old farm boy raised in the city, I'll tell you what that means. You know, an old cow gets out there and she goes out early in the morning, and that cow, she'll put down her long old slivering tongue, and she'll load up on some of that Bahia grass and some clover and alfalfa, and then about the middle of the day, when the sun goes up high, she'll go lie down under a tree. And she's got that grass stored in one of several of her stomachs, and she gets to thinking about it, and she sends a message down to her stomach, and she says, "Alfalfa please"—up it comes. And she chews a while on that alfalfa, and swallows it again, and then she says, "Clover please," and up it comes. And she chews a while on that clover, and what she's taking in she now, in her quiet

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moments, just lies down and enjoys it.

And the word *meditation* has that idea. Have you gotten up every morning and just loaded up on the Word of God so at your lunch break you can chew the cud? I mean, so you can just meditate on the Word of God. I mean, it's hidden away down there, and you can just say, "Ephesians chapter 4, please," and it will come back to you. You can say, "Psalm 23, please," and it will come back to you. That's the idea of the word *meditate*.

But let me tell you another word that is inferred here by the word *meditate*, and it's the word *to hum*. Have you ever gotten a little ditty in your mind, a little tune in your mind, and just hum it all day long? The idea of humming is here. You see, the Word of God is to be like to you like a tune that you can't get out of your head. It is to be absorbed into your system to do you good.

Now let me tell you how this causes you to prosper. When God's Word is so in your heart and in your mind that it becomes to you like a cow chewing the cud, and when it becomes to you like a tune that you can't get out of your mind, then you have divine wisdom. Do you know what wisdom is? It is thinking God's thoughts after Him. That's what wisdom is. Wisdom is seeing life from God's viewpoint. Now here's the plan to pursue. You proclaim the Word of God. Oh, there's power in the spoken word. But, in order to do that, you must ponder the Word of God. You meditate on the Word of God; you just saturate your soul with the Word of God.

C. **We Are to Practice the Word of God**

But now wait a minute. There's one other thing that you must do. Look at verse 8. Not only do you proclaim it, and ponder it, but dear friend, because of these things you practice the Word of God. *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,"*—why? Look—*"that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* Reading the Word of God is marvelous. Memorizing the Word of God is better. Meditating on the Word of God is even better. But all of these are not enough: we must obey the Word of God.

Now let me tell you the difference between meditation and obedience. Meditation and reading and memorizing the Bible gives you knowledge about God, but obedience gives you knowledge of God. Did that get in? Meditation gives you knowledge about God. But when you obey, you know God. Obedience gives you knowledge of God. Let me give you a New Testament verse—John 14, verse 21: *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them,"*—that is, "he that hath my Word and obeys it"—*"he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me"*—that is, "he that obeys my Word"—*"shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,"*—now watch this—*"and will manifest myself*

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to him" (John 14:21).

Does God seem far off? And the sermons that the preacher preaches about, they just seem to be facts that are coming out of a book, but God is not real to you? Jesus said, "If you have my Word, if you keep my Word, I will love you, and I will manifest myself to you." Meditation gives you knowledge about God, but obedience gives you knowledge of God.

You know God as you obey Him, because when you obey Him, there it is then that God begins to reveal himself to you. And so dear friend, here is God's plan to pursue: you must proclaim the Word of God; you must ponder the Word of God; but above all, you must practice the Word of God. You see, God doesn't give you His Word just to satisfy your intellectual curiosity. God gives you His Word that you might obey it. And incidentally, if I were to ask you how many of you believe the Bible is the Word of God, I believe almost everybody here would lift their hand. And you'd lift your hand either because you say you believe it, or you wouldn't want everybody to know you don't believe it. You'd just lift your hand. You'd say, "Yes, I believe the Bible is the Word of God." But do you want me to give you the proof as to whether or not you'd believe the Bible is the Word of God? Whether you obey it. Now folks, that's it: whether you obey it. What we believe, we practice; the rest is just religious talk.

Do you know why I say that? I'll tell you why. You see, when a man obeys the Bible, he's saying this in effect: "God, I believe you and trust you so much I'm going to obey everything you tell me to do." You see, it's proof that we believe. Our obedience is just simply the proof that we believe.

Conclusion

Now dear friend, this is God's plan for prosperity. Remember what prosperity is. It's not having a lot of money in the bank, though that's not wrong, in and of itself. It is not living a life free of pain or trouble—"In this world you'll have tribulation" (John 16:33). Prosperity is the progressive realization of God-given goals. God gave Joshua a goal—there was a land to be conquered—and then God said, "I'm going to give you the power to do what I have commanded you to do. As I was with Moses, I'll be with you; and nothing will stand before you."

God has a plan for your life, and there is no thrill, there is no fulfillment, on this earth that can take the place of discovering the will of God and doing it. That, my friend, is prosperity. And you'll be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, and whatever you do will prosper." And all hell can't stop you. Hallelujah!

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Success God's Way: Part 1

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 21, 1996 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:1-9

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."
JOSHUA 1:8

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Introduction

Be finding in the Old Testament the book of Joshua, and we are talking tonight about "Success God's Way." Now we have been in a series entitled "Investing for Life," and we told you this morning that it is God's plan that we be prosperous and that we be successful. We just want to make certain that it is real prosperity and real success that we get. And I don't think you can talk about genuine success for very long without coming to the first chapter of the book of Joshua.

Now the book of Joshua is a gigantic object lesson. Now it is actual, literal history: it happened. But it is more than history; it is the story of God's ancient people going into Canaan—that's the history. But beyond that, it becomes an object lesson for twentieth-century Christians. The Bible tells us clearly and plainly in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 11, *"All these things happened unto them for examples"* to us. (1 Corinthians

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10:11) So you can take these Old Testament history stories and read them, and just shout your way all the way through. It's an adventure story. The Bible is incredibly interesting. It's not full of legends or fairytales; these are true stories, but so interesting if you watch God's people as they cross swollen rivers, and as massive walls fall down at the shout of victory, and powerful giants are put to flight. And there's the ebb and flow—the drama—of all of these things. History, yes; but also devotional literature.

Now, learn this: that victory is God's gift to every child. You know, when I say that, sometimes people just give me a sympathetic smile. They say, "Well, that's pulpit rhetoric." They don't really believe it. But if you're not living in victory, you are living beneath your privileges. You are to be living day by day in constant victory. The Bible says, *"Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."* (2 Corinthians 2:14) Now either that's true, or it's not true. How many of you believe it's true? Let me see your hands. All right now, what we need to do is to bring our attitude up with our theology. You see, the Bible admits the possibility of defeat in the life of a Christian, but the Bible never admits the necessity of it. We are to be living in victory.

Now the land of Canaan represented in that day victory for the Israelites, the children of Israel; but in a devotional sense, it represents the land of victory for those of us who live in Memphis, Tennessee, today. The children of Israel had come out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land. If you're tired of being a wilderness wanderer and want to be a Canaan conqueror, then pay attention. Now there are three things, basically, we're going to the think about when we think about victory tonight. The first of these is that we need to visualize our victory. And then, we need to vitalize our victory. And then, we need to verbalize our victory.

I. We Need to Visualize Our Victory

Now you understand why I've chosen those words if you'll just take your Bible and look with me in Joshua chapter 1, verses 1 and 2: *"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel."* (Joshua 1:1–2)

Now, look up here and let me tell you something. Moses died. Moses was the great general. He was the great prophet and commander. He was the great leader. But he died. Leaders come and go. Leaders finally die. God's purpose did not die. You see, God's purpose is alive through all of the centuries and God's plans don't die with individuals.

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A. **Canaan Represented Freedom**

Now, what did Canaan represent so long ago to those people who were just about to go into the land of Canaan? Well, for one thing, it represented to them freedom. Up until this time, they'd been a nation of slaves, and Canaan represented the land of freedom. What's God's plan for Adrian? What's God's plan for you? Freedom. What did Paul say in Romans chapter 6, verse 14? "Sin shall have no more dominion over you"—*"sin shall not have dominion over you:"*—you are to have freedom over the power of sin—*"for ye are not under the law, but under grace."* (Romans 6:14)

B. **Canaan Represented Fullness**

But not only did it represent freedom; it represented fullness. Before they went into Canaan, they were out there in the desert and they were on a very meager diet. They were being fed with manna. And, very frankly, they came to a place where they said, "We're sick and tired of it"—*"our souls loatheth this light bread."* (Numbers 21:5) What was in Canaan? Well, it was a land that flowed with milk and honey, corn and wine, and oil and figs, and grapes and pomegranates. It represented fullness. And all of that speaks to me and to you about the fullness of the Spirit. Those of us who are walking in the victory are not only to have freedom; we're to have fullness and the fruit of the Spirit—the love, the joy, the peace, the goodness, the gentleness, and so forth. That is to be in our lives.

C. **Canaan Represented Fulfillment**

A third thing that Canaan represented to them: not only freedom, and fullness, but fulfillment. You see, up until this time, they had merely heard sermons about Canaan. Spies had told them about Canaan; but now they're about to come in and see for themselves.

Aren't you tired of just being sermon sampler? Aren't you tired of just standing on the border, as it were, and looking over into Canaan? Wouldn't you like to get in there and walk around and pick a few grapes and do a little camping in Canaan's fair and happy land? Wouldn't you like to claim your possessions?

Now I say, "claim your possessions," because look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon…"*—now, watch very carefully how it says this—*"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast."* (Joshua 1:3–4) God says, "There it is. There is the land. Here are the borders. Here are the boundaries. Here are the blessings, and," God says, "it's yours."

Now, listen carefully. God said, "You see it? I have already given it to you." It was

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theirs before they went in and got it. Our duty—listen carefully, precious brother, dear sister—our duty is to possess our possessions.

Now victory is not something that God will give you: He's already given it to you. You have it now. You say, "Well, if I have it, how come I don't have it?" I'll tell you why you don't have what you have: because you have not possessed your possessions. God didn't say, "I will give you the land of Canaan." He said, "I have given it to you." (Joshua 1:3) And what we need to do is to put the foot of faith on the promises of God, and say, "This is mine, Lord. You said it's mine; so I claim it." You say, "How? I don't understand. How can I have it if I don't have it?"

Well, let me ask you a question: How many of you have books in your library you haven't read yet? Are they yours? Well, yes, in a sense. But what you need to do is to possess your possessions.

Do you know what the life of victory is? It's simply walking on conquered ground. And who has won the victory? God has won the victory. He says, "I have given it to you." The victory is a God-given victory. And for you and for me, those of us who live this side of Calvary, that victory was won by the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross. And Jesus, facing that cross, said, *"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."* (John 12:31) When Jesus died upon that cross, Satan's kingdom came crashing down. And Satan sails a sinking ship; he rules a doomed domain. His back has been broken by Calvary. He doesn't want you to understand that. He does not want you to understand that he has been stripped and shamed and rendered helpless by Calvary. Now what we need to do is to put the foot of faith on the blessings of God, the victory that is ours, and claim it.

You know, I love that passage over there in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3 where it says that God has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* (Ephesians 1:3) Now, listen. He has blessed us—not *will* bless us, *has* blessed us. If I were to ask you tonight how many of you have all the love you need, or all the patience you need, or all the courage you need, or all the faith you need, or all the wisdom you need, or how many of you have all that you need, hardly a hand would go up unless you understand where I'm coming from. And yet the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 1 that God has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* Well, why don't we have them? Because we haven't possessed our possessions. We need to begin to put the foot of faith on the promises of God and say, "That is mine."

All right now, how is the victory won? Not by trying, but by trusting, believing God. God said to Joshua, "It's yours. Now, go take what I've already given you." You see, God is the One who has given the victory. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life:"*—well, is it because Joshua is so great? No, listen—*"as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail*

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thee, nor forsake thee." (Joshua 1:5) You see, in living in victory, *victory is not our responsibility; it's our response to His ability.* God says, "There's the land. Go take it, and I will be with you," you see?

Now, let's translate that over into the New Testament. Now, remember, *"all these things happened unto them for examples"* to us. (1 Corinthians 10:11) If I had to be shipwrecked on an island with just one portion of the Bible, I think I'd take the book of Romans. And if I could only take one chapter, I believe it would be Romans 8. And in Romans chapter 8, verse 37, here's what Paul said: *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Romans 8:37) You see, our victory is in Christ. *"We are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* And, actually, what that means—*"more than conquerors"*—it means we're not just simply conquerors; we're *"more than conquerors"*: literally, not super-conquerors, but supra-conquerors. It's not that we win with a field goal in the last three seconds. I mean, friend, there's not even a contest. Satan is vanquished.

Now, listen. I want to tell you something. I'm preaching to me tonight as well as I'm preaching to you, and I'm still on my way. And I know when that finger points out there are three pointing at me right there. I need to learn this truth. I'm telling you, we need to get this rehearsed in our hearts. We need to visualize our victory. We need to see what God has promised. *"All these things happened unto them for examples"* unto us. There is a land of freedom. There is a land of fullness. There is a land of freshness. It is ours. And fruitfulness—it is ours.

II. We Need to Vitalize Our Victory

Now not only do we need to visualize it—and I hope you're visualizing it right now. Don't you want to be victorious? Don't you want to live the way the Bible says that a child of God ought to live? Now, secondly, not only do you need to visualize it, but what you need to do is vitalize it, because you need to take this off the page and put it in your life.

A. The Promises Are for All Saints

Now, let's read verse 5 again: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life:"*—now, watch a principle here—*"as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."* (Joshua 1:5) Now, what's he saying? He's saying, "Joshua, the promises didn't die with Moses."

B. The Promises Are for All Seasons

I'm going to tell you something else: The promises didn't die with Joshua; the promises are for all saints and for all seasons. Look again. He says, *"I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."* (Joshua 1:5) Time cannot erode the promises away.

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You know what we're apt to do? We're apt to take those people that lived back yonder in Bible times and say, "Yes, that was another age. That's when God did miracles. That's when God worked with His people. Those people breathed a different air than we breathe. That's not for us." No. God says, "Look, Joshua. I was with Moses. I'll be with you." And He'll say to me, "Adrian, I was with Joshua, and I will be with you." Psalm 119, verses 89 and 90: *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations."* (Psalm 119:89–90) Don't let two thousand years keep you from a blessing. I mean, if God has said it to those folks, and He has not canceled or abrogated the promise, then you can claim it for your own.

C. The Promises Are for All Situations

It's for all saints. It's for all seasons. It's for all situations. Now when Joshua was about to go into that land, that didn't mean that it was going to be all honey and no bees. It was a land filled with milk and honey; but every place you have honey, there are bees. And every cow has to be milked. There are going to be seasons of difficulty, and there are going to be situations of hardship. And Joshua did not go into Canaan in a rocking chair. But God was with him, and God said, "Joshua, I will not leave you. I will not fail you nor forsake you."

Now in the New Testament the writer of the book of Hebrews picks up this theme. And in one of my favorite verses in the New Testament, in the book of Hebrews chapter 5, God reiterates this promise. I read it in the Amplified Bible. How many of you have ever read the Amplified Bible? Let me see your hands. Well, good. The Amplified New Testament is where they take the New Testament and they take these original words of the New Testament in the Greek language and they begin to amplify them—not to change them, but to find synonyms and amplifications and adjectival descriptions that just simply help us to understand the fullness of the language. Now the Amplified New Testament is sometimes fun to read. Sometimes it gets a little laborious, because it keeps going on and on and on and on. But this verse is incredible in the Amplified. I want you to listen to it: it's been a great blessing to me. Hebrews 13, verse 5: "For He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you *nor* give you up *nor* leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless *nor* forsake *nor* let [you] down (relax My hold upon you)! [Assuredly not!]" (Hebrews 13:5) Isn't that great? I mean, God says, "I'm not going to leave you"—"I am not going to leave you." *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with you."*" (Joshua 1:5) And the writer of Hebrews says, "Hey, and that applies to us, too. He will never, never leave us nor forsake us."

So what we need to do is, we need to somehow vitalize this. Now, watch verses 6 and 7. How do you vitalize it? Here's the command. You want to be victorious? Listen:

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"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest." (Joshua 1:6–7)

You say, "Now, Pastor Rogers, that's the trouble with you preachers. You just told us that it all depended on God, and God had already given us victory, and all that. Now here's the hard part: I'm supposed to be strong, and I'm supposed to be courageous. And I'm supposed to keep the law, and I'm not supposed to turn to the right hand or the left hand. And how do you expect me to do all of that? You're just giving me double talk, pastor." No, I'm not—no, I'm not! Now, listen to me, folks. Behind every command of God is the promise of God. God is not going to command you to do anything you cannot do, as He is with you and God fills you and equips you.

Now, what did Joshua need? The same thing Adrian needs; the same thing that Jim Whitmire needs. What did Joshua need? He needed strength to be strong. He needed boldness: *"Be…courageous."* (Joshua 1:7) He needed obedience: "Do all that I tell you."

Well, how many of us in our flesh have those three qualities of strength, boldness, and obedience? We don't have it. And yet this is what he's commanded to have if he's going to be victorious. And yet on the other hand, we said the victory was God's and not ours. There's no contradiction here, folks. Listen. Every demand upon my life is not a demand upon me; it is a demand upon the God in me. Now you must understand this: that if God tells me to do something, and God does not equip me to do it, He becomes a tyrant. Every demand upon me is a demand on the life of God that is within me. And so the same God who makes these demands upon us is the same God who supplies them to us. But He will not do it until we choose to have Him do it—He will not do it until we choose to have Him do it.

That's not double-talk. This same Joshua told the rest of the folks, *"Choose you this day whom ye will serve…as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15) God does it, but we must allow God to do it. Did you know that weak people can choose strength? Did you know that cowards can choose boldness? Did you know that unfaithful people can choose obedience? It's not that we do it. We cannot do it without Him; He will not do it without our yielding to Him. Now God said, "There's the land. It's out there. I want you to have it. Go take it." But we must choose to obey Him.

Now you must visualize this victory. You must vitalize it. You must say, "God, I know that you are with me. I know I need this courage. I know, dear God, that I need this boldness, this strength, this obedience; so now, Lord, by faith, I choose it." You visualize it. You vitalize it.

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III. We Need to Verbalize Our Victory

Now here's where it really begins to work: Then, you verbalize it. Look, if you will now, in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous…"*—that's the reason why I chose this text—*"for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* (Joshua 1:8) Now once we understand what God has done for us, we visualize it—we see it; then we vitalize it. We say, "O God, it's mine: I want it." Then, we begin to verbalize it. We begin to speak victory.

A. The Word of God Is to Be in Your Mouth

Now the Word of God is to be in your mouth. It's very, very important that the Word of God be in your mouth. Look at it in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth."* (Joshua 1:8) Let's get a New Testament text that will fit that. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 29: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."* (Ephesians 4:29) The Word of God verbalized ministers grace. Do you know what we need to do as a congregation? We need to be ministering grace one to another. And that's the reason we need to be speaking the Word of God one to another.

John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, was converted. Do you know how he was converted? John Bunyan was eavesdropping, and he was listening to several women, and they were talking about their love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and he was listening. I wonder if anybody would ever get converted eavesdropping on your conversations. We need to verbalize our victory—not let the Word of God depart out of our mouths.

Joyce and I have been rejoicing in a text in Malachi, and Joyce said, "Adrian, that's one of the most wonderful verses in all of the Bible." And she's been reading it to me—and I've shared it with you several times—but it's in Malachi chapter 3, verses 16 and 17: *"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him"* (Malachi 3:16–17)—these people that spoke, that thought about His name, and spoke one to another. Verbalize your victory. Take the Word of God and say it—announce it—because He hath said, *"We may boldly say."* (Hebrews 13:6)

B. The Word of God Is to Be in Your Mind

Now if the Word of God is to be in your mouth, then it follows, as night follows day, it

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must be in your mind. Look again in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein."* (Joshua 1:8) So, do you want to live victoriously? All right: You verbalize your victory. And why do you verbalize it? Because you vitalized it. Why did you vitalize it? Because you visualized it. It's all right there in the Word of God. God has promised it. But you can't verbalize that which is not first in your heart; so you meditate on the Word of God day and night. And your spoken Word speaks to your heart, and your heart speaks to the spoken Word, and there is a sympathetic vibration that gets to going. Meditation is so wonderful. Meditating on the Word of God is like getting a tune in your mind and you just hum it all day long. You just can't get it out. Meditation just absorbs the Word of God in your heart and into your life. Over and over again we're told to meditate on the Word of God.

When you meditate on the Word of God, you become a man of wisdom. I had lunch today with Gregg Hauss, who's here on the front row. I asked him—he's served here five years, and we're going to thank him for five years of service—I said, "What have you learned at Bellevue?" He said, "Well, one thing I've learned is to watch the leaders in the church." And he said, "I've seen wisdom—I've seen wisdom from being around the leaders in the church." That was a blessing to me.

Do you know where wisdom comes from? Meditation. Do you know what meditation is? Meditation is just thinking God's thoughts after Him. Meditation is letting your soul soak in the Word of God over and over again. That's the reason the Bible says—and I used this text this morning on success—Psalm 1, verses 1 and 2: *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."* (Psalm 1:1–2) And then this psalm, this wonderful psalm, says, *"And whatever he doeth shall prosper."* (Psalm 1:4) Why? Because he has soaked his soul in the Word of God.

Now, listen—this Word is to be in your mouth. It is to be in your mind. And when it gets in your mind—let me just say this about it being in your mind here for just a moment. A good illustration of this is where young David was fleeing from wicked, jealous old King Saul. And Saul was chasing him for his life. And the scripture I'm reading to you is from Psalm 63, verses 3 through 6. David is wondering whether or not he's going to be killed, and David says this: *"Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."* (Psalm 63:3–6) How could David be so victorious like that? He'd been meditating.

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Do you know what a constant habit of mine is? And I've got some bad habits I won't tell you about. I'm not talking about drinking or smoking or anything like that. But I've got a good habit: I'll tell you about that one. I like to get a verse of Scripture and go to sleep with it. I like sometimes just before I go to bed to get a Word of God and get in bed with it. And I'll lie there and I'll go to sleep thinking about that verse of Scripture. And I'll run it through my mind and chew on it and soak on it. It's just a wonderful thing to do: let the last word be His Word and just go to sleep thinking about the Word of God. That's what David did. David said, "This is the meditation." It was in his mouth, because it was in his mind.

C. The Word of God Is to Be in Your Manner of Life

And because it was in his mouth, and in his mind, it was in his manner of life. Now, watch it very carefully: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* (Joshua 1:8) In your mouth, in your mind, in your manner of life—it's got to be in your mouth, it's got to be in your mind, before it can be in your methods. We're talking about living in victory. Reading, speaking, memorizing, and meditating will give you knowledge about God.

Now, listen carefully. Obeying will give you knowledge of God. I want to say that sentence again. I have it written here in my notes: reading, speaking, memorizing, and meditating will give you knowledge about God. Obeying God will give you knowledge of God. Here's the verse that explains that—John 14, verse 21: *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me…"*—don't say you love Him if you don't keep His commandments—*"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,"*—now, watch it—*"and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."* (John 14:21)

Study gives you knowledge about God. Obedience gives you knowledge of God. When you have His commandments and keep them, that's when He makes Himself real to you. Meditation leads us to the door of success, but obedience is the key that opens that door. "Well," you say, "I don't have what it takes to obey." Yes, you do. God has given it to you. It's yours. Possess your possessions. Choose courage. Choose boldness. Choose obedience. You can, if you will. You need not live a defeated life.

The Word of God was not given to satisfy your curiosity and to scratch your intellectual itch; it's given to lead you to obedience, that leads you to a knowledge of God, that leads you to victory. The real proof, folks, that we believe the Bible is that we obey it. And when we obey it, God reveals Himself to us in such a wonderful way. You see, you're saying to God, "God, I trust you so much that I'm going to obey you in everything you tell me." And God says, "And I'm going to manifest myself to you."

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Conclusion

Now in these days, when we're talking about finances, folks, let's realize that in finances, and in all of our life, victory is ours. Take this first chapter of Joshua. Visualize it. Vitalize it. Claim it. Verbalize it. Begin to speak it. Let it be in your mouth. Let it be in your mind. Let it be in your manner of life. And you're going to find yourself walking on conquered ground. You'll come out of the wilderness and on into Canaan.

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God's Way for a New Day

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 22, 1982 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:1-11

"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel."
JOSHUA 1:2

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Introduction

Now I want you to take your Bibles tonight and turn to the book of Joshua. Joshua is a wonderful book, and it has a special message for us tonight in the things that we're facing here at Bellevue. These are momentous days at Bellevue Baptist Church. As a matter of fact, these are perhaps, at least in my ministry that I've had with you here, our most important days. We are coming to the climax of ten years together as pastor and people. I've pastored here at Bellevue Church longer than I've ever pastored a church. I pastored the first church three years that I was in college. Of course, it took me more than three years to get through college, but I wasn't called until after my first year in college. And I pastored that church for three years in college. And then, I pastored another church for three years when I was in seminary. And I managed to cram three

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years of seminary into four years, but I only pastored that church for three years when I was there in seminary. And then, when I graduated from seminary, I pastored a church in Fort Pierce for six years. And God moved me from there to the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, and I was there for eight years. And now I've been here for ten years. I'm kind of like that preacher who said, "I believe in long pastorates." He said, "I've only had two churches in all of my sixty years of ministry," and he said, "I believe in a long pastorate. I stayed with both of them until they died." Well, I have been here ten years, and I just want to stay till you die and I die; and we'll just go to heaven together.

But we are looking at the next ten years, and we believe that God has given us in the past just a decade of blessing. But we believe that the future is so bright, so wonderful, and so glorious. And so we're going to be talking, as we are facing a new day—we're calling it "Bellevue's Bold Breakthrough." And you know that on September 12, which happens also to be my birthday, and our anniversary of ten years together as pastor and people, the long-range planning committee is going to report out. And we're going to be giving God thanks and praise for ten years together as pastor and people. But we're going to be projecting our hearts and hopes out into the future for ten more years if Jesus tarries. And there's going to be a tremendous challenge given to your heart and my heart, I trust, from the heart of Jesus Christ. And we're calling this challenge "Bellevue's Bold Breakthrough."

And in the light of that, to begin tonight to prepare our hearts for it, I want us to study the book of Joshua chapter 1—and not all of that book, but I want us to look at the first eleven verses tonight, because I call these first eleven verses "God's Way for a New Day"—"God's Way for a New Day." I believe here we have a recipe for victory, a formula for success, a plan of conquest, a blueprint for victory. And I want us to look at it together, because, you see, the book of Joshua is indeed God's object lesson on victorious living. Now it is a book of history: It tells of what happened so long ago. But it is not mere history; it is a guidebook for modern Christians. You say, "The Old Testament book of Joshua is a guidebook for modern Christians?" Absolutely! Absolutely! Paul said that all of these things happened to them for examples to us. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

And so we're going to learn tonight, as God wants us to learn, the way of victory. Now I want to say that victory is God's gift to every Christian, and therefore victory is God's plan for every church. Yet, not every Christian experiences victory, and not every church knows conquest. But the problem is not with God, and the problem is not because we do not have the ability nor the promises to live victoriously. We are simply living beneath our privileges, and we are not claiming the promises that God has for us. The Christian's life should be a life of conquest.

Now Christians do not need to be wilderness wanderers; they need to be Canaan

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conquerors. And the book of Joshua tells how they conquered Canaan. And Canaan is an example, an illustration, a type, a prophecy of the Spirit-filled life. When the Israelites were in Egypt, that pictures an unsaved man under bondage of Satan, because Pharaoh is a type and an illustration of Satan. When they came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb, that pictured their redemption, their being saved out of the land of Egypt. But they came out of the land of Egypt, and they began to wander in the wilderness.

Now there is perhaps a legitimate wilderness experience; that is, a new Christian is a babe in Christ for a few moments, or for a few days, or for a few weeks, or for a few years. But he is to grow up. But these Israelites stayed in the wilderness for forty years. They simply wandered in the wilderness rather than moving into the land of Canaan. Finally, under Joshua, they did move into the land of Canaan.

The land of Canaan, the Promised Land, does not represent heaven; it represents victory now; it represents rest now; it represents conquest right now. And God not only has called us out of Egypt, and God has not only called us through the wilderness, but God has called us into a life of victory. Again, I want to say that it is not God's plan that you as a Christian, nor we as a church, be wilderness wanderers, but that we be Canaan conquerors. And there is a Promised Land of victory for us: victory over giants of despair, and fear, and disobedience, and doubts. There is a land where the roses of Sharon perfume the air with sweet fragrance. There is a place where the fruit of the Spirit hangs in lustrous clusters from bending boughs. It is the promised land of victory for God's people individually and for God's people corporately. And I believe that God is bringing us to the threshold of a new day and a new victory, and I want us to see how we are to be together people of conquest: "God's Way for a New Day."

I. The Purpose of the New Day

Now, let's begin reading the first four verses: *"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan,"*—that is, "over the river Jordan into the Promised Land"—*"thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast."* (Joshua 1:1–4)

Now, here our Lord is speaking of the purpose of this new day. What is the purpose of this new day for the children of Israel, then? And what is the purpose of our new day here, as God is giving us new land to conquer? It, ladies and gentlemen, is victory—

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victorious living. You see, before, they had been in the wilderness; and before, they had been in Egypt—so, what does the land of Canaan mean?

A. Release

First of all, it means release: We're no longer slaves to Satan.

B. Rest

Secondly, it means rest: no longer wandering around in the wilderness in aimless confusion, going around in circles.

C. Refreshment

Next, it meant refreshment. There was a land of milk and honey, a land of streams and waterfalls, a land of wine and corn. And God wants His people to be refreshed.

D. Reality

Next, it meant reality. You see, they had heard sermons about Canaan; they'd been told lessons about Canaan. But now they were moving into Canaan. They were going to stop enduring religion; they were going to start enjoying salvation.

And so this is the purpose of God's people. God says, "You move out, cross over Jordan into the land that I have given to you." (Joshua 1:2) Now God had already given them the land. And God has already given this church victory. We don't have to pray for victory; we have the victory. We pray from the victory on the basis of that victory. God says, *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you"* (Joshua 1:3)—not "will I give you"; "I've already given it to you."

You say, "Well, I don't have it. So, how could He have given it to me?" Well, you have failed to possess your possessions. Do you have books in your library that you have not read? Many of us do. Are those books yours? Yes. Have you possessed them? No, because you've not yet read them and appropriated. They're yours, but it's up to you to go in and possess your possessions. Victory is yours; conquest is yours. *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you."* And the people of God, the people of Bellevue, are going to have to start putting their feet down upon the promises of God and saying, "Lord, we're claiming victory here. We're claiming victory there. We're claiming victory here." "Every place that the sole of our foot will set down upon"—God says—"that have I given you." The victory was already theirs, but they needed to claim it. And so the purpose of all of this was that they might possess their possessions.

II. The Promise of the New Day

Now, secondly, not only do I want you to notice the purpose of it, but I want you to notice the promise of it, as we begin reading in verse 5: *"There shall not any man be*

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able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will I be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua 1:5–9)

This was God's promise. After God had given His purpose, "Go in and possess the land," with that purpose came a promise, because, you see, behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command. All we have to do as a church is to hear God's marching orders and obey. For where God guides us, then God is going to sustain us. For where God guides, He provides.

Now I want you to notice the promise that God gave to these people after He gave them His purpose.

A. **The Promise of a Conquering Power**

First of all, He gave them a promise of a conquering power. Look in verse 5: *"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life."* (Joshua 1:5) Now that's a wonderful promise—victory all the way: "Not any enemy shall be able to withstand you." You say, "Brother Rogers, if we launch out into a big program—a bigger program—as a church, what about those who won't like it? What about the humanists? What about the perverts? What about the liquor dealers? What about the pornographers? They won't like it." There's not an enemy that will be able to stand against us. "Greater is he that is in us than he that's in the world." (1 John 4:4)

But you say, "But, wait a minute, pastor. He's talking to Joshua; He's not talking to us. That's Old Testament, not New Testament." Well, let me give you some New Testament. Romans chapter 8, verse 37: *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,"* amen? (Romans 8:37) Now you know what that word *"more than conquerors"* means? It means not "superconquerors" but "supraconquerors"—that is, not just a conqueror, but more than a conqueror, through Jesus Christ. Now, don't get the idea that God's people are supposed to kick a field goal the last three seconds and win the game. That's not it. It's supposed to be the saints, one hundred; the other side, zero. That's the way it's supposed to be. Now what I'm trying to say is, dear friend, we are more than conquerors through the Lord Jesus.

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(Romans 8:37)

B. The Promise of a Constant Presence

And so, what is the promise of it? Number one: There is a conquering power. But not only the promise of a conquering power; there is the promise of a constant presence. Look in the last part of verse 5: *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."* (Joshua 1:5) Isn't that a wonderful promise? *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee"*: a conquering power and a constant presence. The promises did not die with Moses. That's what God is saying to Joshua.

So many times we look back to the old days, and we say, "Boy, it must have been wonderful to live on earth when Moses lived and God dealt with Moses. It must have been wonderful to live in the days of Joshua. It must have been wonderful to live in the days of Peter and Paul and Mark and John and Bartholomew." Friend, some people say, "It must have been wonderful to live in the days of Charles Finney and Dwight L. Moody." Some say, "It must have been wonderful to be a member of the church when Dr. R. G. Lee was pastor and Ramsey Pollard was pastor." Friend, I want to tell you, the same God that was with them is with us. Isn't that wonderful? You see, dear friend, the promises did not die with Moses. They did not die with Joshua. They did not die with Peter. They did not die with Paul. They did not die with Dr. Lee. God is on the throne, and God says, "As I was with them, I will be with you."

You see, time cannot erode the promises of God away, for the Bible says in Psalm 119, verses 89 and 90, *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness [continues throughout] all generations."* (Psalm 119:89–90) Isn't that wonderful? All generations. And the promises are just as new, just as fresh, just as exciting, just as relevant, just as applicable, just as obtainable, just as real tonight as they've ever been. And don't you get the idea that somehow this is ancient history. "As I was with Moses, I'll be with you."

C. The Promise of a Continuing Possession

And, dear friend, there's the promise of a conquering power. There's the promise of a constant presence. And there is the promise of a continuing possession. Look in verse 6: *"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them."* (Joshua 1:6) Now God had promised to give it to some other people; but they didn't get it. God had promised it to them; but they didn't obtain it. Now, dear friend, we must not make the mistake of thinking perhaps that the promises died with people like Moses. God is still on the throne. And, on the other hand, we need to get our eyes off the failure of other saints and realize also that God is still on the throne. You see, God gave a promise to another generation, but that generation died in the wilderness and they never did claim

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the promise. It's not that God would not have given it to them—He would. And, see, there was a continuing possession; but they needed to possess their possessions.

Now, do you know what's wrong with many of us when we start out to do something in the name of Jesus? We get our eyes on some other church over here that failed, or we get our eyes on some other Christian over here that failed, and we say, "Well, they failed, and we may fail, too." Well, if we behave like them, we will. But, you see, there was a generation that should have inherited the promises; they didn't, because they did not believe God.

Now what we need to do is stop comparing ourselves with one another, stop comparing ourselves with other generations, stop comparing ourselves with other congregations, and just start to read the Bible and take it at face value. Leonard Ravenhill said, "One of these days, somebody's going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves." Oh, I'd like for us tonight just to read it, and believe it, and say, "Dear God, I'm claiming that promise."

D. **The Promise of a Certain Prosperity**

You see, a promise of a conquering power, a promise of a constant presence, a promise of a continuing possession, and a promise of a certain prosperity. Now, prosperity is God's plan for His people. Look at it—verses 7 and verse 8: *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."* (Joshua 1:7) Now, don't you want to be prosperous? The Bible says that God "takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants." (Psalm 35:27) The man who is a righteous man is *"like a tree planted by the rivers of water…his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall"*—what?—*"prosper"* (Psalm 1:3)—*"whatsoever he doeth."*

Now the devil has told us that God's people are not supposed to be prosperous. Friend, that's a lie out of hell. God's people are supposed to be prosperous, and we are supposed to prosper. There is a certain prosperity. Now, look again—verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"* (Joshua 1:8)—not only a continuing possession, but a certain prosperity. No ifs, ands, and buts about it, they are to be prosperous.

Now, don't equate prosperity with wealth—don't do that. What is prosperity? What is success? Nothing more, nothing less, than this: than the continual realization of the plan and will of God for your life. That's it: the continual realization of the plan of God and the will of God for your life. That is prosperity. Friend, if you are fulfilling the will of God for

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your life, you're prospering. If you're not, I don't care how many millions you have in the bank—you're a pauper. Prosperity is getting in on the plan and the will of God for your life. And a continual realization of the will and plan of God for your life is success.

Now, what are the rules for this prosperity? Let's look at them.

1. We Are to Proclaim the Word of God

Number one: We are to proclaim the Word of God. Look in verse 7: *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth."* (Joshua 1:7–8) This church will be strong to the degree its pastor and its teachers, its deacons and its people, speak this Word. This book of the law is not to depart out of our mouth. These words are life.

2. We Are to Ponder the Word of God

But not only are we to proclaim the Word of God; we're also to ponder the Word of God. Look again in verse 8: *"But thou shalt meditate therein day and night."* (Joshua 1:8) Now the word *meditate* has the idea of humming. The Word of God ought to be like a tune that you can't get out of your mind. Over and over again, we're to be meditating on the Word of God. You see, when you meditate on the Word of God, here's what you're doing: You are thinking God's thoughts after Him. As this Word gets into your heart, you take these promises and you meditate on them. Not only do you proclaim it, but you ponder it. And it gets in there, and you're thinking God's thoughts after Him; and therefore you have God's wisdom. And when you have God's wisdom, then you walk in wisdom. And when you walk in wisdom, you walk in victory.

3. We Are to Practice the Word of God

Now, watch. Not only are we to proclaim the Word; not only are we to ponder the Word; but therefore we are to practice the Word. Look again in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth;"*—that is, we're to proclaim it—*"but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,"*—we're to ponder it. Now, watch it—*"that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein."* (Joshua 1:8) We're to practice it. What good is it to proclaim it? What good is it to ponder it if we do not practice it?

Now, listen. I want to tell you one of the greatest truths that I've ever learned—and I'm still learning it. Reading the Bible, memorizing the Bible, meditating on the Bible will give you knowledge *about* God; but obeying the Bible will give you knowledge *of* God. Did that get in? Reading the Bible, studying the Bible, meditating on the Bible will give you knowledge *about* God; it is obeying the Bible that gives you knowledge *of* God. Let me give you a verse—John 14, verse 21. Now, listen to it; it's a key verse. Jesus said, *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that*

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loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21)

You say, "Pastor, it seems like God is ten billion light years away." All right, I want you to proclaim the Word, ponder the Word, and begin to practice the Word. When you have His commandments and keep them, Jesus says, "I'm going to manifest myself to you." And, you see, meditation leads to the door of success; but obedience is the key that unlocks the door. Meditation leads to the door of success; it brings you right up to that door. But it is obedience that unlocks the door so that you can walk through.

And so, what was the promise that God gave to these people so long ago who are examples to us? Number one: There's the promise of a conquering power. Number two: There's the promise of a constant presence. Number three: There's the promise of a continuing possession. Number four: There is a promise of a certain prosperity.

III. The Provision of the New Day

Now, the third thing I want us to notice: not only the purpose of it—that we possess our possessions; not only the promise of it—that God gives us power to be victorious and successful; but I want you to notice also the provision of it. Let's continue to read now in verse 10: *"Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it."* (Joshua 1:10–11)

Now after the purpose, and after the promise, there was to be a provision. They were to lay up for themselves food, because there was a new day. And so you would think, if they're going to cross Jordan, He would have said, "Prepare a bridge." Or you would have thought that He would have said, "Prepare a boat." But He didn't say, "Prepare a bridge, or a boat." He said, "Prepare bread. Prepare something to feed upon." Why? Every general knows this, as General Joshua knew it: that an army travels on its stomach, and that this army must have provision. And so He said, "There's going to be a new day. And here's God's way for a new day: You prepare something to eat."

Now, what had they been eating all of this time? Forty years in the wilderness, they had been on a desert diet. They had been eating manna, and they'd been eating for forty years. Now there's nothing really wrong with manna, but they were not supposed to eat it for forty years. It was sort of a pabulum for wilderness weaklings. It's all right to eat pabulum, but you're not to stay on pabulum too long. You know, manna is a wonderful thing: It's a type and a picture of Christ. But it is possible to overestimate manna. Manna is not all that some people think it is.

Now, manna represented the new life in Christ. You see, they started to eat that manna when they came out of Egypt and into the wilderness, because manna does

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represent new life in Christ. In the book of Exodus chapter 16, they saw it; it was new to them. (Exodus 16:15) They didn't know what it is, and so they started calling it, "What is this?" or, "What? What? What?" And, you know, "what is this?" means "manna": "We don't know what this stuff is." And so it was something new to them. And so every morning they'd get up and eat some "what is it?" And then, for lunch, they'd have some "what is it?" And then, for supper, they'd have some "what is it?" And that's all right. It was new and good and exciting and thrilling. But, you know, you just can't subsist on cotton candy, and you can't just live on manna all the time. I guess you could live on it. But it was not supposed to satisfy them; it was merely supposed to sustain them until they could make the relatively short trip out of Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan. You see, the manna had in it the taste of oil and the taste of honey. Now the land of Canaan was a land that flowed with oil and flowed with honey. What the manna was to do was to simply whet their appetite.

Now there are a lot of Christians who are on a desert diet. All they're doing is feeding on manna, and they're sick of it. You see, after these Israelites had eaten this manna for forty years, they had manna up to *here*; I mean, manna in the morning, and manna in the evening, and manna at suppertime. A little kid never asked his mother, "Mama, what's for supper?" He knew: manna. "What's for breakfast?" He knew: manna. They boiled it, baked it, stomped it, fried it, fricasseed it; but it was still manna. I mean, they ate it every way you could possibly eat it; but it was still manna—manna, manna, manna! Can you imagine having the same thing every day, three times a day, for forty years? At the end of that time, they said, *"Our soul loatheth this light bread."* (Numbers 21:5) They were sick of it; they were bored with it.

Now, you see, that is a picture of a wilderness weakling who has had nothing but spiritual pabulum all of his life. And there are many Christians that way; I mean, they are saved; they have literally come out of Egypt, but they're just going around in circles in the wilderness. They're still on manna. They have never moved into the land of Canaan—corn and oil, and wine and grapes and pomegranates, and the lustrous fruit that God has, the fruit of the Spirit, the oil of God's Holy Spirit. They've never drunk from those rivers of revival in that wonderful land. They've just been out there on that glaring desert, know every rock by name, sat upon every cactus, acquainted with every rattlesnake for forty years in the wilderness.

Now, you'd get tired of that after a while, folks. Do you know the problem with many Christians? They are bored stiff. I mean, saved people, they are bored stiff because they've been going around in circles in the wilderness. Let me tell you, do you know why there are so many boring preachers? Because they themselves are bored. Do you know why there are so many boring Sunday School lessons? The teacher himself, herself, is bored. Oh, how we need to get out of the wilderness and into that reality!

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And so Joshua says, “Look, I want you now to prepare some victuals. There’s going to be a new diet for a new day. We’re going to move up higher. We are not going to just continue on this desert diet. We’re not going to continue to live dumped in the desert between Egypt and Canaan. We’ve been sustained, but we haven’t been satisfied. And we’re going to move up higher.”

And so, what does that mean to us today? I think it means, ladies and gentlemen, that if God is challenging our church—and I believe He is—to greater things, more wonderful things, to a new day, He’s also challenging us to a new diet. We’re going to have to know the deep things of Christ. We’re going to have to love the Word of God, feed on the Lord Jesus, walk in the Spirit as never before. God is going to have to strengthen His people, for an army marches on its stomach. In our staff meeting, as we were talking about this—as we were talking about our program of reaching more people, enlarging a greater vision—all of us came with the unanimous spirit to say, “If that is true, then how much deeper we must go in the Lord! How much purer we must be! How much more we must pray! How much more we must look to God and feed on the Lord Jesus Christ!” There must be a new diet for a new day.

IV. The Power of the New Day

And so we see the purpose of it: “Conquer the ground that I’ve given you.” We see the promise of it, because behind every purpose is a promise and the strength of God. Then, we see the provision of it: that we’re going to feast on the things of God in a new way. But now, the final thing I want you to see is the power of it. Look again, if you will, in verse 11. Joshua said, *“Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan.”* (Joshua 1:11) Jordan is the river of death. It speaks of death; it symbolizes death. “After three days, you’re going to pass over Jordan.”

Now sometimes people accuse me of seeing too much in the Bible. But I’ll tell you, I’d rather see too much than see too little. And when I see a phrase like *“three days,”* my ears perk up, because I see that *“three days”* all the way through the Bible. And it speaks, it pictures, it typifies, it portrays to me resurrection power. The Lord Jesus Christ was in that grave three days and three nights, and I believe what this typifies to me—what it says to me—is this: that the life of victory and the life of conquest is living in the power of Jesus’s resurrection. They would no longer be buried in the desert; they are coming to a new life.

Let me give you a New Testament verse that goes with this. Here’s the great ambition of the life of the Apostle Paul. In Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10, here’s what he said: *“[Oh,] that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”* (Philippians 3:10) Don’t you want to know that? Don’t you want to be a partaker of that

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mighty power that raised up Christ from the dead? We are to be living every day in resurrection power. And many Christians who are saved are not living in resurrection power. You see, many Christians know the power of His crucifixion, but they don't know the power of His resurrection.

You say, "What's the difference?" When you know the power of His crucifixion, you come out of Egypt by way of the Passover Lamb. But when you know the power of His resurrection, you move into Canaan, you see? Now you may know the power of His crucifixion. I mean, you may be saved; you may be going to heaven. But you've just simply come out of Egypt. You are in a desert, dumped in a desert, buried in a desert with a desert diet and a desert mentality, and you're a wilderness weakling. But it is time for you to step over this river of death after three days and know the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Romans chapter 5 and verse 10, the Bible says that, "We have been reconciled by His death. How much more shall we be saved by his life?" (Romans 5:10) Thank God that we've been reconciled by His death. Thank God for the power of His crucifixion. But don't you want to know the power of His resurrection? Don't you want to be saved by His life?

Now that doesn't mean to be saved from hell. You're saved from hell by the power of His crucifixion. It means that you know that you are saved by His life. That means that day by day by day you are walking on conquered ground; that you are no longer a wilderness wanderer; that you are now a Canaan conqueror; that God has given you a new provision; that you're feasting on Christ. There is new bread from heaven for you to feed upon: corn and oil and wine, and all of the rivers of revival that flow through that land. And you are living your life in a supernatural power. The Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, gave Himself to us, that He might live through us, and in us. And that is the power of His resurrection.

Conclusion

Listen. He died to give Himself for us; He arose to give Himself to us. He died to bring us out of Egypt, but He arose to take us into Canaan. He died to redeem you; He arose to live in you. He died for what you've done; He arose to supply what you should be. Now it's one thing to live in the power of his crucifixion. It's one thing to come out of Egypt. But don't you believe that God's calling Bellevue into Canaan? I do. And, folks, I'm going. I've already just stepped over—and I like it. As a matter of fact, I've been over there quite a while. Every now and then I find myself fording the river and going back; but, friend, I just want to live there—I just want to live there.

I was telling a preacher today—he saw me in my study after the service—and I told this young man—and I mean it, folks; I'm not blowing smoke when I say this: I'm as

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excited today about Jesus Christ as I've ever been in my life. I really am. And I'm anticipating living for Him and growing in Him. I tell you, it's so great—it's so wonderful—to be in Canaan, to live in Canaan. And I just want my life to picture what Joshua is talking about here when he says this. "Not a man shall be able to stand before you. There's going to be this constant victory. There's going to be this constant success. There's going to be this continuing presence. I'm going to be with you, and "every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you." (Joshua 1:3)

Major Ian Thomas is a great Christian. We've had him here. Major Ian Thomas said this concerning the power of Jesus's resurrection: "To be in Christ, that is redemption; for Christ to be in you, that is sanctification. To be in Christ, that makes you fit for heaven; for Christ to be in you, that makes you fit for earth. One makes heaven your home; the other makes earth His workshop." Oh, that's what I want: to know Him and the power of His resurrection.

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Ditches on the Holy Highway

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 7, 1993 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:7-9

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

Outline

Introduction
I. The Word of Faith
  A. The Ditch on the Right: Presumption
  B. The Ditch on the Left: Insensitivity
II. The Work of Faith
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  A. The Ditch on the Right: Manipulation
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Conclusion

Introduction

Joshua chapter 1—find it, please, and let's look at verse 7—Joshua chapter 1. Now, the book of Joshua is history, but it is a great object lesson. It is more than history; it is a guidebook for Christian living, for the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 11 that everything that happened to those people happened to them for examples to us. (1 Corinthians 10:11) And so it is more than history; it is devotional literature, and it is a guidebook for Christian living for modern Christians.

And actually, the book of Joshua is a book of victory. And victory is God's plan for every missionary. Victory is God's plan for every church. Victory is God's plan for every Christian. And if you're not living in victory, may I tell you that you're living beneath your privilege. I want to say that again: If you're not living in victory, you're living beneath your privilege. Now, the Bible admits the possibility of defeat, but it never assumes the necessity of defeat. And if you're living in victory, you're failing to live up to your birthright as a Christian.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 7. God, talking to Joshua, is giving him a blueprint for

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victory, and then He says this: *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."* (Joshua 1:7) The title of the message: "Ditches on the Holy Highway"—"Ditches on the Holy Highway." Every good highway is mounted up—and so, there will be a ditch on the right, and there will be a ditch on the left. Now you're to stay on the highway, but you're not to get off to the right; you're not to get off to the left. Now, God says to Joshua, "Joshua, you're going somewhere, and I want you to have a good trip. I want you to have a prosperous trip wherever you go. So, don't turn to the right, and don't turn to the left."

God's instruction for you when you got saved in order to bring you to Christ was, "Stop, turn right, and go straight." That's what happens to us. Friend, we turn right; we turn to Jesus, and then we are to go straight. Now, as a pastor, I spend a lot of my time pulling good people out of ditches, because they have started out on the holy highway and yet they somehow turn to the right or they turn to the left.

Now, the holy highway is the way of faith. And the book of Joshua is a book of victory through faith. Now, there are three experiences in the life of faith, and I want you to get these in your heart and mind, because I'm going to build a message around these three. If you live the life of faith, and if you travel the journey of faith, and you go the way of faith, there are three basic steps in the life of faith. Listen: first of all, there is the word of faith; secondly, there is the work of faith; thirdly, there is the wait of faith. Let me give it to you again: there's the word of faith; there is the work of faith, and there is the wait of faith. And all of those are experiences you'll have on the holy highway. And if you're not careful in each of those experiences, you're going to get in a ditch: you're going to get to the right, or you're going to get to the left, and you will not stay on the holy highway. And this is especially true about missionaries and people who are seeking the will of God for their lives.

I. The Word of Faith

So on the holy highway, first of all—first of all—you must hear the word of faith. Look in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do…all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous…"*—your way is the holy highway—*"then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."* (Joshua 1:8) And so, first of all, in any faith, you must hear the word of faith—this book of the law.

What is faith? I've told you this many times; I want to tell you again: *Faith is reliance on the Word of God—faith is reliance on the Word of God*. One more time: *Faith is reliance on the Word of God*. Romans 10:17: *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by*

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the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

Faith is not emotion. Faith is not praying about something till you feel warm around the heart and wet around the lashes, and you get goose bumps and liver shivers. That's not faith; that's just emotion. Nothing wrong with emotion; but emotion is no guide.

I remember one time when I was a student at New Orleans Seminary. I had gone down to preach in a rescue mission. And New Orleans, they call it the Crescent City because it's built on a curve on the Mississippi River. And I had gone the way I had gone this night many times. I thought I knew the city of New Orleans. But when I got back in my automobile, and with the homing instinct I thought I had in my mind, and with the directional sense I thought I had, I started out; but I never could get back to my home, back to where I lived, back to my apartment. I kept ending up at the Mississippi River. There was something wrong. I said, "I know I'm going in the right direction." And so I'd turn around, and I'd start again. But after a while, I would end back at the river.

And I tried this about three or four times, and then I said to myself, "Self, why don't you read the street signs, and why don't you go by what those signs say?" And I said to myself, "Well, they're all wrong, because something tells me that is not the right direction." And, folks, I had to take myself by the nape of the neck and make me go according to what those signs said rather than what I felt.

Have you ever had an experience like that? Everything in me told me I was going in the wrong direction; but I just simply had to say, "I will go by the word and not by my emotion." And, sure enough, it brought me home. Remember that emotion and feeling and instinct are not faith.

And intellect is not faith. You have sometimes an idea: "This is a good idea." Now, the Bible is not contrary to intellect and the Bible is not contrary to reason. You don't have to check your brains at the door when you become a Christian. But faith goes beyond reason. It may be rooted in reason, but it goes beyond reason. And *where reason cannot wade, faith must swim.* And don't take the Bible and don't take your Christian life and just kind of parade it by the judgment bar of your mind. The Bible says, "Lean not to your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5) Now, if you are to stay on the holy highway, and you're to live a life of faith, remember you must hear the Word of God.

Now, actually, there are two ways that you can hear the Word of God, and both of them are there in verse 7. There's the written Word; we call that the *logos*. It's the Bible word for "word." It means "the written word." This is the *logos*, the Word of God. But there's another word that's also translated "word," and it is *rhema*—a *rhema*. Now, what is the *rhema*? That is the spoken word, like Jesus spoke this word to them. That's not the *logos*; that's the *rhema*. Now, one is the written word, and the other is the spoken word, the word revealed by the Holy Spirit. And God will speak to you both ways. God will speak to you out of the Bible, but God will also speak to you by the Holy Spirit.

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For example, how do you know if you're supposed to be a missionary in Colombia? Are you going to pick up the Bible and read it and it says, "Go to Colombia"? Not in there! So God has to speak out of the Bible. God has to give you the *logos*, but God also has to give you the *rhema*. And God speaks both ways. For example, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 17, the Bible says, *"Take…the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* (Ephesians 6:17) The word *logos* is not used there; the word *rhema* is used there. That is God speaking to you—God speaking to you.

Now, look in verse 7, if you will: *"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee."* (Joshua 1:7) That's the *logos*. But now, look in verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night."* (Joshua 1:8) That's the *rhema*, where God begins to speak to you as you meditate on the Word. God takes a word out of the Word.

Now, you see, the written Word and the Holy Spirit, they work together as you meditate on the Word of God. And remember this: that the *rhema* will never contradict the *logos*, and the *logos* will never contradict the *rhema*. They will confirm one another and complement one another. And this is the reason that you meditate on the Word of God: so God can speak to you after you read the Word of God. It's not just enough to get the facts, the *logos*; you've got to get the *rhema*, the Spirit of God taking the written Word and making it real in your heart. And so he says in verse 8 to *"meditate therein day and night."* (Joshua 1:8)

There's an old oriental fable about some men who were crossing the desert, and suddenly a stranger appeared to them and said, "Before long, you will cross a dry riverbed. When you cross the dry riverbed, get off your horses, go down to the riverbed, and collect some stones. Get very many. Put them in your saddlebags. And in the morning, you will be very happy and very sad." So the stranger disappeared. They passed the dry riverbed and they thought they would try it. And so they got down and picked up some of the pebbles in the nighttime in the dry riverbed and put them in their pockets and in their saddlebags and went on. The next morning, when the sun came up, they looked. And according to this fable, those stones had turned to rubies and diamonds and emeralds and precious gems, and they were very happy, but very sad that they had not picked up more.

And so, that's just a fable. But, you see, when we get into the Word of God, we get stones of truth that God turns through meditation to jewels, precious treasures. We're sorry we just didn't get more of the Word of God. And we get the *logos*, the Word, and then it becomes the *rhema*, and God begins to speak to us out of the Word of God as we meditate on God's Word and let God speak to us.

Now, over and over again, the Bible tells us we're to meditate on the Word of God.

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Psalm 1, verses 1 to 3: *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD;"*—that's the *logos*—*"and in his law doth he meditate day and night"*—that's the *rhema*. *"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."* (Psalm 1:1–3) Or this one—Psalm 19 and verse 14: *"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."* (Psalm 19:14) And then, this is one of my favorites, and I read this one quite often—Psalm 119, verse 97: *"O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day."* (Psalm 119:97)

Now, God speaks to us in our conscious mind, and God speaks to us in our subconscious mind. Now you have a conscious mind, and you have a subconscious mind. Have you ever talked about the fact that you *go* to sleep? Well, where do you go when you go to sleep? You say, "I'm going to sleep." Well, where are you going when you go to sleep? Well, when you go to sleep, you go out of your conscious mind and and you go into your subconscious mind. Your subconscious mind takes over. It's got to run the business for you while you're asleep. I mean, it's got to take care of you and keep you breathing, keep your heart pumping, keep everything going. There's also a part of you that just kind of watches over you subconsciously while you're asleep.

And so you have a lot of things, and if you're not careful, you'll turn the burdens of your conscious mind over to your subconscious mind before you go to sleep. You have problems—you don't deal with them, and you go to sleep with those things on your mind. Your subconscious mind is saying, "Hey, I'm not equipped to deal with all this. I'm going to hand it back." And you wake up. Your conscious mind takes it over, and you wake up in the middle of the night thinking about it, because your subconscious says, "Hey, hey, that's not for me!" And it just kind of hands it back to you. If you do that kind of living, you wake up sometime in the morning more tired than before you went to bed, because you're just kind of wrestling with those things in your subconscious mind that go between your conscious mind and your subconscious, back and forth.

But have you ever gone to bed and maybe just had a problem, and you committed it to the Lord before you went to sleep, and in the middle of the night, it kind of smoothed out, worked out? We call that just kind of sleeping on it, and God just seems to speak to you while you're asleep. You're really not asleep. Things are going on there in your subconscious mind.

Now, Daws Trotman, who is the founder of an organization known as the Navigators—and the Navigators are people who are known for Scripture memory and discipleship—Daws Trotman, I read here recently, had a habit that when he would be out with a group of men or whatever, they would be on a camping trip or retreat of

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something, maybe in a dormitory, just before they would go to sleep, Daws Trotman would call out loud, "HWLW!" And then someone would quote a beautiful verse of Scripture, and they'd all go to sleep. HWLW: "His Word, the Last Word." Isn't that neat? "His Word, the Last Word." Rather than going to bed with Gunsmoke on your brain or something like that, "His Word, the Last Word." And he and his wife would do that: just quote a verse of Scripture and sleep on it.

And almost every night—not every night, but almost every night—I do that. I will go and get a verse of Scripture, put it in my mind the last thing before I get to bed, and go to sleep thinking about that scripture. And there's something very wonderful about meditating on the Word of God. "In his law doth he meditate day and night." (Psalm 1:2) And if you just get the *logos* and you don't get the *rhema*, I don't think you're getting it all. But if you get the *rhema* and you don't get the *logos*, you're certainly not getting it all. But these two, I say, never conflict; they always complement one another. Now, thank God for that double confirmation.

Now, having said that, I said you're on a holy highway, and there are two ditches. And the devil doesn't care which ditch he puts you in, as long as you stay off the holy highway. And God told Joshua, "Don't turn to the right, and don't turn to the left."

A. **The Ditch on the Right: Presumption**

Now, in the word of faith, what is the ditch to the right? The ditch to the right is presumption—presuming that you've heard God when you have not heard God. Now, how can you do that?

Well, with the *logos*, for example, you can take a verse out of context. You can take a verse of Scripture, be reading the Bible, and say, "Hey, I've got a word from God," and you don't have a word from God, because you have wrested the Scripture; you have not really studied the Scripture. You have just taken a text out of a context and used it as a pretext, and you say, "I've heard from God."

We had a man who used to be on our church staff here one time, and he came to me—he was a *workshipper*—and he said, "God has called me to stay at Bellevue Baptist Church and be on the church staff." I said, "Oh?" I said, "Tell me about it." He said, "Well, I was reading in the Scripture, and I found this verse." And, folks, I have not the foggiest idea how that verse meant that that boy was supposed to be on our church staff. It did not relate one little bit. You can take the Bible and make it say almost anything you want it to say if you deal with the Bible that way.

Let me give you some verses: *"Judas…went and hanged himself."* (Matthew 27:3–5) *"Go, and do thou likewise."* (Luke 10:37) And, *"That thou doest, do quickly."* (John 13:27) Now, friend, that's all Bible—that's all Bible—but that's playing fast and loose with the Scripture. There's a ditch. It's the ditch of presumption—presuming that you

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have heard the Word of God, that you've heard the *logos*, but you've not really studied the Bible.

Or, that you've heard the *rhema*. Now, friend, a verse or a voice—you'd better be very careful. Don't go to the right with a verse and go to the right with a voice. You say, "God told me." That's scares me to death when people tell me that: "God told me." Oh, God told you? "Yeah, God told me." Maybe He did. But the way people tell me sometimes that God tells them things just kind of makes me think they've got a hotline somewhere that nobody else has.

Let me give you some other verses, friend. Jeremiah 17 and verse 9: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9) How do you know it's not just autosuggestion? You say, "Well, a spirit told me." Well, the Bible says in 1 John chapter 4 and verse 1, *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits"*—or *"test the spirits"—"whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."* (1 John 4:1)

Now you must hear the word of faith. But some people have gone to the mission field and they've not heard God. They've taken verses out of context, and they've taken autosuggestion and called it God speaking to them. And it is neither the *logos* nor the *rhema*. They have turned to the right. Sometimes they get in a World Mission Conference and hear somebody tell about a great need and a great open door, and their heart burns, and they say, "I volunteer." *God is not looking for volunteers; God is looking for obedient servants who have heard Him.* That's very important that you understand that.

B. **The Ditch on the Left: Insensitivity**

Now, that's the right hand ditch: hearing the word of faith. There's a left hand ditch. What's the left hand ditch? The right hand ditch is presumption; the left hand ditch is insensitivity, where you're not listening. It's not that you get a false word; you just don't get any word at all, because you have not reported for duty, and you don't listen to the Lord. Maybe you're not reading the Bible and God is not speaking to you. Maybe you're not having a quiet time and you're not meditating on the Word of God. You don't get the *logos*, and you don't get the *rhema*; and you say, "Well, I'm excused, because God didn't speak to me."

Well, dear friend, God is speaking. You're just not listening. You come to the prayer time and you say, "Listen, Lord, your servant is speaking," when you ought to say, "Speak, Lord, your servant listens." Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:27)

So on this holy highway, number one, you must hear the word of faith. And don't you fall in the ditch of presumption on the one hand, and don't you fall in the ditch of

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indolence and insensitivity on the other hand. But you get the Word of God, and you begin to meditate on that Word, and let the Holy Spirit of God speak to you, and God will speak to you.

II. The Work of Faith

Now, secondly, not only must you hear the Word of God, but you must do the work of God. Go back to our text again now in Joshua, if we might—Joshua 1, verse 8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,"*—now, watch this—*"that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein."* (Joshua 1:8) There is the Word of God that leads to the work of God. The Bible says in James chapter 2, verse 17, *"Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."* (James 2:17) But let me give you a definition of faith that I gave to the men last Thursday in the men's Bible study: *Faith is not merely believing in spite of evidence; it is obeying in spite of consequence.* Did that get in? Faith is not merely believing in spite of evidence; it is obeying in spite of consequence. Now you *"observe to do…all that is written."*

Now, just as in hearing the word of faith, in the work of faith there are also two ditches. And we're told not to turn to the right and we're not to turn to the left.

A. The Ditch on the Right: Hyperactivity

What is the ditch on the right hand side of the work of faith? It is hyperactivity; it is overzealousness. It is being *"righteous over much."* (Ecclesiastes 7:16) We somehow get the idea that activity pleases God. It may not. We have the idea, you know, that a busy Christian is happy Christian. Dr. Vance Havner said, "If Baptists had a patron saint, he'd be Saint Vitas." We're just so busy all of the time. We get the idea, "Well, if I do more for God, God will do more for me." Friend, God doesn't want you to do anything for Him—not in the true sense of the word. He wants to do something through you.

And that is more than a turn of phrase. And it is obedience that God is looking for, not primarily activity. When a person gets into the ditch of hyperactivity, he generally quits doing something that God has told him to do and wants him to do. It's just as dangerous to run ahead of God as it is to lag behind and not to follow Him. And I've known of these folks who, trying to do the work of God, run ahead of God; and they go when God has not sent them, trying to do a good thing in the work of the flesh—hyperactivity.

Somebody talked about one particular man like this and said, "Do you think he'll get to heaven?" And his friend said, "Yes, if he doesn't run right past it."

Hyperactivity is not of God. There's enough time in every day to do gracefully everything God wants you to do.

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B. The Ditch on the Left: Passivity

Now, there's the work of faith, but on one side is hyperactivity. The other ditch is just the opposite: on the left is passivity, where you become passive and you say, "Well, bless God, God is just going to do it all. I am just resting in Jesus." And they believe that resting in Jesus means doing nothing, and they believe that when you walk in the Spirit, you just kind of quit thinking. No! *You're to rest in the Lord, but not rust.* Don't you see how the devil would love to make a fanatic out of you in either way—either put you over here in the ditch of hyperactivity running around knocking things over and calling it "serving the Lord," or over here just sitting in the ditch of passivity doing nothing and calling it "resting in the Lord"?

The whole land of Canaan to which the children of Israel went in—God is talking to Joshua here—it all pictures the land of rest. But I want to tell you that Joshua did not take Jericho from a rocking chair, even though it is the rest of faith. And so, if God is calling, and God wants to use you—if God put you on the holy highway—you must hear the word of faith. But be careful of the ditch of presumption, or be careful of the ditch of indolence—not listening in. You must do the walk of faith. Observe to do all that is written. But beware of the ditch turning to the right of hyperactivity, or turning to the left of being a passive person, failing to do what God would have you to do.

III. The Wait of Faith

Thirdly, there is the wait of faith. Look in verse 9, if you will: *"Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."* (Joshua 1:9) The Lord is your companion on the holy highway, but generally, you'll find there is a time span between the promise and the possession. God is telling Joshua, "I have given you this land for a possession; but if you're not careful, you'll lose courage. If you're not careful, you'll be dismayed." You see, when you wait on God after you've heard the word of faith and you have begun to do the works of faith, then sometimes you don't see things work out as you think they ought to, and you tend to get off the holy highway again. You tend to turn to the right or you tend to turn to the left.

A. The Ditch on the Right: Manipulation

Now, if you turn to the right, do you know what you do? You begin to manipulate things. You begin to try to make things happen because you can't wait on God. And Satan will tell you, "Hey, God has called you, and nothing is happening. So, make it happen."

God called Moses to be a missionary. God called Moses to lead His children out of the land of Egypt into the land of Canaan. And Moses, rather than waiting on God, began to manipulate things, and he killed an Egyptian. Do you remember that? He took

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the matter in his own hands, and he killed an Egyptian. He started out to be a missionary; he became a murderer. He made a mess of everything, and he stopped the work of God for about forty years by trying to manipulate.

Abraham—God gave Abraham a word. God said to Abraham, "Abraham, I am going to make you a father of many nations. Through you the whole world is going to be blessed. I'm going to give you a son in your old age." (Genesis 17:4) But Abraham could not wait on God. He began to manipulate things. He and Sarah got together and said, "Well, we have this maid named Hagar. She's fertile. I'll go in. I'll sleep with her. She'll conceive. We'll have a son. We'll call him the son of promise." What a dreadful thing he did! He here is—can't wait on God. He's on the holy highway. But now, the devil puts him in a ditch, and that's the ditch of manipulation.

And I think we've all been there, pulling our radishes up by the roots, seeing how they growing, and then jamming them back in the ground, and trying to make something happen, rather than waiting on God.

That's one ditch; that's the ditch to the right hand.

B. **The Ditch on the Left: Hopelessness**

Do you know what the ditch on the left hand is? It's hopelessness—just giving up. When time comes to wait on God, we turn to the right—we wreck in the ditch of manipulation—or we turn to the left and we just simply give up. And Joshua is warned against this in verse 9: *"Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with the whithersoever thou goest."* (Joshua 1:9)

We used to sing a chorus around here when we first began this program of raising money for these buildings and so forth. It was from Ephesians chapter 3, verse 20. We put it to music: *"Now unto him…"*—remember that little chorus we used to sing?—*"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."* (Ephesians 3:20) I was meditating on that verse. I want you to listen to what it says now. First of all—listen; this is Ephesians 3, verse 20; if you're one of those who don't want to wait on God, and you're getting hopeless now, listen—God is able to do all we ask. That's what that verse says: God is able to do all we ask. But I'll tell you what else it says: God is able to do all we ask or think. That's pretty good. But I'll tell you what else it says: God is able to do above all that we ask or think. But I'll tell you what else it says: God is able to do abundantly above all we ask or think. I'll tell you what else it says: God is *"able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."* Thank God! What a mighty God we serve!

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Conclusion

Now, if God is calling you—and He may call you to be a fulltime missionary, but God calls all of us to live the missionary life—God has called you to a holy highway. God has called you to a life of victory. God has called you—every one of us. I want to tell you that the Bible admits the possibility of defeat, but never the necessity of it. You're to get on that holy highway. And God says, "Don't turn to the right. Don't turn to the left." Hear the word of faith—this book of the law. Meditate in it. Get the *logos*; get the *rhema*. Don't have presumption; don't have indolence. Just stay on the road. Do the work of faith. Oh, friend, obey God's Word—not with hyperactivity on the right hand side, not with passivity on the left hand side, just observe to do what God has told you to do. And it's your responsibility, first of all, to get the word of faith so you can do the walk of faith. And then, if it doesn't work out right away, don't be dismayed. Don't be afraid. The Lord your God is with you. (Joshua 1:9) So, don't get in the ditch of manipulation, or don't get in the ditch of hopelessness. *"Wait, I say, on the LORD."* (Psalm 27:14) Thank God for the holy highway.

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God's Call to Conquest

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 11, 1977 Time: 00AM

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 1:10-11

"Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it."
JOSHUA 1:11

Outline

Introduction
I. A Call to Preparation
II. A Call to Anticipation
III. A Call to Separation
Conclusion

Introduction

All right, take your Bibles please and turn to the book of Joshua. We're taking a journey with Joshua now. And we're preaching verse by verse through Joshua, though not necessarily touching every verse, but hitting the high points in this marvelous, wonderful book. And as we said last week, as we journey with Joshua, we're going to see great massive walls fall before us; we're going to see rivers open up so we can go through; we're going to see giants flee from before us; and all of this is an illustration of the victorious life that we're to live as Christians. For the Bible says that *"these things were our examples."* (1 Corinthians 10:6) So this is more than history; this teaches us the New Testament living here in Memphis, Tennessee, that our lives are to be lives of conquest, and the book of Joshua is but an illustration of this glowing truth. You see, ladies and gentleman, for you, and for all of those, there is a promised land of victory today over the giants of despair and fear and disobedience; and doubts and walls of resistance are to fall from before you, and rivers of trouble are to dry up at your feet.

You say, "Brother Rogers, it's about time that it started happening for me." Well then, pay attention as we study today in this scripture "God's Call to Conquest"—"God's Call to Conquest," reading in Joshua chapter 1, beginning in verse 10: *"Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals…"*—now, children, that word *victuals* means "food." If you're from the country, you would say, "Prepare vittles"—*"Pass through the*

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host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it." (Joshua 1:10–11)

There is a land for you to possess today. There is a promised land for you. There's a place where the roses of Sharon are blooming in profusion and filling the air with their fragrance. There is a place where the fruit of the spirit—love, joy, gentleness, goodness, mercy, temperance, faith—grows in clusters and hangs from every vine. There is a place, a land flowing with milk and honey. There is a place for you, dear friend, to find rest. Not just someday, but now, today, God's people are to be living victoriously. There is a promised land of rest for you—not someday, now—now. *Oh, there's heaven in the sweet by-and-by, but there's to be victory in the nasty now-and-now.* You are to know victory today. There is a promised land for you.

You see, let's remember the picture now and the typology. God brought the Jews out of Egypt. That's a picture of our being redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, for the Passover lamb was slain that night. God brought them through the wilderness. The wilderness experience typifies a carnal Christian. A carnal Christian means an immature Christian. But then, there was the land of Canaan. They entered into the land of Canaan, the Promised Land—and that represents the fullness of the Christian life. And so everyone is in one of three places this morning: Some of you are still in Egypt—you've never been saved at all. Some of you are in the wilderness—you've come out of Egypt, but you've never entered into Canaan; you're saved, but you're not really enjoying it; you're going to heaven second-class. And then, there are some of you who have entered right on in—you have possessed your possessions; you have stopped being wilderness-wanderers and you have become Canaan-conquerors.

Now, look again at this verse. Joshua says, *"Go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it."* (Joshua 1:11) Now, the promise is a gift, and as we preached last Sunday, it is our duty—yea, our delight—to possess our possessions; but even though God has given us the land, we're to fight for it. There's no contradiction—there's no contradiction! The only difference is we don't fight for victory; we fight from victory. For the Lord has already given us the victory. When we believe it and then begin to battle, oh, what a difference it makes! When we understand that we're fighting a fight that's already won rather than losing a battle already lost, what a difference it makes! When you can go into the fight and know—I say know, know, know—beyond a shadow of any doubt that you must prevail, you cannot fail; that God already has given you the victory.

Now, that seems a little hard for you to get your mental teeth into. I want you to continue to listen, and I trust before the message has come to an end that it will come together. We're talking now about "The Call to Conquest," and I want you to notice three

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things about “The Call to Conquest” this morning.

I. A Call to Preparation

First of all, I want you to notice that it is a call to preparation—a call to preparation. Notice again in verse 11—Joshua commanded the people, saying, *“Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals.”* (Joshua 1:11)

Now they were getting ready to cross the swollen Jordan River, and the Bible tells us in Joshua 3 that the Jordan overflowed its banks every year at this season. So here was the turbulent water. You would have thought that Joshua would have said to them, “Prepare a bridge.” Or you would have thought he would have said at least, “Prepare a boat.” But he says, “Prepare bread.” Isn’t that strange? What he is saying to them is “Before you go to do battle, and before you try to cross the swollen Jordan, the very first thing that you need is proper nourishment.”

Now I cannot emphasize that too much: you need proper nourishment. Have you ever heard the saying that “An army travels on its stomach”? Now you can’t be a good soldier if you’ve got an empty stomach. And so here Joshua is saying the very first thing that you must do is to prepare proper food. Now, up until this time they had been on a desert diet. Do you remember what they were eating in the desert? They were eating manna. Do you know how long they’d eaten it? For forty years. And now, Joshua is saying, “It’s time for a new diet; it’s time for a change of diet.”

Now, manna is good, and it’s not my job here to put it down too much, but let me tell you something, friend: We have perhaps romanticized the idea of eating manna a little too much. You know, we thought of it as a combination between sirloin steak and strawberry shortcake, or something like that. And, you know, we preached all of these ideas about manna, but actually it was a thin, coarse, dry wafer that didn’t have…—well, it was kind of strange. As a matter of fact, when the children of Israel first began to eat it, the Bible tells us in Exodus chapter 16, verse 15, they picked it up, and they said, *“It is manna.”* (Exodus 16:15) They named it themselves.

Do you know what *manna* means? Translated, it means “What is this?” That’s exactly what it means: “What is this?” Ladies, have you ever fixed anything new—you know, a soufflé or something—and the kids sit down at the table and say, “What is this”? Well, that’s exactly what they said: “What is this?” That’s what the word *manna* means. But it was new; it was something they had never tasted before. And because it was new and they never tasted it before, it illustrates the new life in Christ that only the redeemed can know—only the redeemed can know. And no one else could taste of this manna except those that had come out of Egypt under the blood. And so, in a sense, it represents the new life that we have in Christ.

But as we go on—and you might want to jot down these scriptures in the margin

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there, so you can look them up—Numbers 11, verse 8, (Numbers 11:8) and Exodus 16, verse 31 (Exodus 16:31)—those two verses tell us something more about the manna; they tell us that the manna had the taste of oil. Now, oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Also, in Exodus chapter 16, verse 31, it had a taste like honey. Now, notice: not oil, it tasted like honey. It only would whet their appetite. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and it was simply to whet their appetite, I believe, for the true oil of Canaan. And honey represents the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey. So, this was sort of a heavenly appetizer, sort of a divine *hors d'oeuvres*.

Now, it's all right; but you don't want to eat *hors d'oeuvres* all of your life. I mean, you don't want to just eat appetizers, or snacks, or sandwiches, you know, with the crust off. You don't want to spend the rest of your life just eating snacks. They were not meant to eat this manna for forty years—I'll guarantee you they weren't. You see, they were supposed to come right out of Egypt, go right through the wilderness, and right into Canaan. There is a legitimate wilderness experience; there's a time for a baby to be a baby—but you don't want to be a grown-up baby, do you?

Suppose a baby stays a baby for forty years. Baby talk is cute when it's with a baby. And a baby says, "Da Da." But I mean, if a sixteen-year-old boy says, "Da Da," you want to swat him.

I mean, what's the difference? You see, you're supposed to grow up. Now you're supposed to get off of pabulum, and you're supposed to grow up to meat and potatoes; you're supposed to come out of the wilderness and get off the manna. And you're supposed to get on to a new diet, because a wilderness-wanderer needs one kind of diet, but a Canaan soldier, a conqueror, needs another kind of a diet. And so, Joshua says, *"Prepare you victuals."*

You see, the problem with these Israelites is they were sick and tired of manna, but they wouldn't go into Canaan. They were sick and tired of manna, but they wouldn't enter into Canaan, so they were dumped in the desert. And they remembered the good meals they had in Egypt. They couldn't have any of the meals in Canaan. And they were right between.

Check Numbers 11 out for just a moment. Turn to Numbers 11 and look in verse 4—Numbers 11 and verse 4: *"And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?"*—"I want a steak"—*"We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."* (Number 11:4–6)

Now, folks, forty years of manna—I mean, nobody ever got up and said, "What's for breakfast?" They knew what was for breakfast: manna! I had a friend of mine who told

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me down in Florida, “Back during the depression we had it hard, but we had three meals a day: we had oatmeal for breakfast, cornmeal for dinner, and no meal for supper.” He said, “Three meals a day.” Now, that’s what they had: manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, and manna for dinner. Whether you’re from the country, or whether you’re from the city, it all depends on how you put that, but they had manna three times a day and seven days a week. And every month, and every year, they’d been eating this manna, and they were sick and tired of it. And now, Joshua says, “If you’re getting ready to enter into the land, it is time for you to get into the kitchen and prepare some victuals, something that will stick to your ribs.”

You see, the problem with the manna is that it sustained them but it did not satisfy. They were bored. Have you ever met any bored Christians? I tell you, *the worst enemy of Christianity is bored Christians*. I tell you, the greatest tool that Christianity has in my estimation is a glowing Christian. Do you know that *a Christian with a testimony is worth a library full of arguments*—I mean, somebody who’s on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ? But we have Christians today who are dull and tired, and it’s the sameness—they’ve been on manna so long; and there’s no excitement, there’s no thrill, they’re undernourished. Oh, there’s enough to give them life, but that’s about all. They need a new diet. They’re getting ready to enter into the Promised Land, the land of victory, and there must be another form of nourishment.

Oh, listen. There’s something very significant about this manna business that we’re talking about. When God called Israelites out of the land of Egypt, He gave them three feasts to keep, but He said, “You keep these feasts when you get into the land of Canaan.” Now, God never allowed them to keep the feast in the wilderness, and when they kept the feast, the feasts were to have a teaching emphasis. For example, your son was supposed to come to you, and your son was supposed to say, “Father, what do all of these things mean?” That’s what the Bible says: *“And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt.”* (Exodus 13:14)

Now, let’s suppose here’s a father and his son, and they’re in the land of Canaan, and those luscious grapes are there, and the figs and pomegranates, and the milk and the honey, and the corn and the wine, and there are beautiful streams and mountains, and valleys and farms, and the family is so happy; and they’re having the feast of the Passover, and the boy says, “Daddy, why are we doing this?” And the dad says, “Son, we’re doing this because God has been so good to us. God brought us out of Egypt. God led us through the wilderness. God gave us a Promised Land. Our God is a great God.” And that boy will say, “He sure is, Daddy. Oh, what a wonderful God we have!” You see? And the father is able to teach his son a great lesson. He says, “Son, this is because of what the Lord did for me when He brought me out of Egypt.”

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But let's suppose this father is still in the wilderness. Let's suppose he never does enter into Canaan, so he decides he's going to keep the feast in the wilderness. So, there they are out there in the wilderness, and the father gets ready to keep the feast—I'm talking about in the desert, and there's the boy sitting on a cactus, there's the father sitting on a hot rock, and they're out there with nothing but manna, and the father is going through some kind of a little ceremony. And the son says, "Hey, Dad, What you doing?" "Oh," he says, "Son, I'm celebrating." The boy looks around. You know, he's dying of thirst. A rattlesnake goes by, and he's out there in the wilderness. He's been eating dust and manna all of his life. He says, "What are you doing, Dad?" "Oh," he says, "Son, we're celebrating." "What are you celebrating, Dad?" "Well, I'm celebrating what the Lord has done for me." That boy, the only thing he's ever heard is sermons about Canaan. That's all—he's never seen it. He says, "Well now, Dad, if this is all we're celebrating, don't you think it's about time we got back to Egypt?"

Do you want me to tell you why the devil is getting the kids of some of our best families? I'm talking about deacon's kids, and preacher's kids, and people who sing in the choir, and attend church three times a week, and give their tithe; people who have really come out of Egypt, but they have never gone into Canaan, and the kids have been dumped in the desert, and they have never seen reality. I know people who say, "I can't understand it. The Bible says, *'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.'* (Proverbs 22:6) And we made him go to Sunday School; we made him read his Bible—we made him!"

Oh, friend, you missed it ten thousand miles! It's not you forcing that kid to go to Sunday School and saying, "I trained him up in the way that he should go." Do you know the best training that you'll ever give that child is when you are celebrating in the land of corn and wine, and milk and honey, and grapes and figs and pomegranates, when you are showing that child a life of victory in Jesus? He's going to say, "What Mom and Dad has is real, and I want it, too."

It's time for a change of diet. It's time to get away from this desert diet. It's time to move into Canaan. It's time to possess our possessions. It's time to have all that our Lord God has promised us. And so, Joshua says, *"Prepare…victuals."* (Joshua 1:10) What's he talking about? Well, he was talking in that day about physical food. But the spiritual application is that we're going to have to have a change of diet. We're going to have to start feasting on the Word of God like we've never feasted on it before.

Listen. If you want to inherit Canaan, you'd better start feeding on the Word of God. And I'm not talking about Twinkies; I'm talking about beefsteaks. I'm not just talking about knickknacks, and sandwiches, and *hors d'oeuvres*, and tantalizers, and appetizers. I'm talking about going down deep and getting the Word of God, and letting the Word of God nourish you till you're strong in the Word. Prepare, if you're going to

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possess your possessions. You see, there is a call to preparation.

Now, you know what some of you are apt to do? You're apt to listen only so long and then tune me out. I heard of an old Arab who was traveling through the desert. He was weary at the end of the day, so he got down off his camel and sat down on the sand cross-legged, got his little knapsack out, reached in his knapsack, and pulled out three dates. That's all he had; that was his meal for the evening. Then he got his lamp and lit his lamp in the darkness, and he took the first date and held it under the lamp and opened it. And there was a worm in it, so he threw it over his shoulder. He reached in the knapsack, took out the second date, opened it, and looked. And there was a worm in that one. He threw it over his shoulder. He reached in his knapsack, got the last date, and leaned over, blew out the lamp, and ate it.

Now, do you know what happens so many times when the light of God's Word shines upon our desert diet and shows us just what it is rather than obeying the Word of God? We blow it out and keep on eating the same thing.

Now, listen. Are you going to hear the Word of God today, or are you just going to say, "Well, rather than obeying it, I'll just ignore it." Friend, that's your privilege—that's your privilege. You can ignore what I'm saying today; but I'm telling you, dear friend, that if you want to possess your Canaan, you had better make preparation—you'd better prepare. You'd better get in the kitchen and start preparing something from the Word of God that will nourish you, because an army travels on it's stomach, and this is especially true about God's army.

II. A Call to Anticipation

Now, secondly, not only is there a call to preparation, but there is a call to anticipation. I want you to notice again in verse 11: *"Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan"* (Joshua 1:11)—three days.

Now, what is the significance of three days? I don't know what it speaks to you about, but to me it speaks of resurrection life. Three days—our Lord was in the grave three days; and Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days; and three days, to me, speaks of resurrection life. Abraham and Isaac went up on that mountaintop for three days. And we find this theme as it runs through the Bible and speaks to me of resurrection life, because you see the life in Canaan is nothing more, nothing less, than resurrection life—resurrection life! Coming out of Egypt pictures redemption, but going into Canaan pictures sanctification. The Bible tells us—and, incidentally, let's turn to that verse in Romans chapter 5 and verse 10 for a moment—Romans chapter 5 and verse 10—such a key verse: *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."*

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(Romans 5:10)

Now, listen carefully, or you're going to miss what I'm about to say. You are reconciled by the death of Jesus, but you are saved by the life of Jesus. Now, what does that mean? It means that when Jesus Christ died on the cross, that was to bring you to God; that was so that your sins could be forgiven. But if you are to be saved—and the word *saved* doesn't mean to go to heaven; oh, that's just the by-product—if you're to live victoriously, it's not the death of Jesus that enables you to live victoriously; it's the life of Jesus, the fact that Jesus Christ is still alive. See, we are reconciled by His death, but we are saved by His life. His death brought us out of Egypt, but it's His life that enables us to live in Canaan.

You see, the Canaan life is the resurrection life. Do you remember where Paul said, *"that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection"*? (Philippians 3:10) You see, the greatest demonstration of the power of God was not in the creation of the world, but in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from grave—that is, the power of His resurrection. And what God is saying is all of the power that raised Jesus Christ from the grave is available to Adrian Rogers.

Now, you see, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, He was dying for what I have done; but when He rose from the grave, He rose to live in me for what I am. You see, at the cross, Jesus Christ gave Himself for me; but in the resurrection, He gives Himself to me. And so, being saved is not just simply saying, "I look backward to some cross where Jesus died in agony and blood two thousand years ago, and I look forward to one day going to heaven. But in the meanwhile, I'm just kind of toughing it out in the wilderness." That's not what it is, dear friend. Listen. The Jesus Christ who died to give Himself for me has risen to give Himself to me and He is now alive in me. That is the principle of Canaan. It is living in the power of the resurrection. You see, Christ is alive and well in Memphis, Tennessee, and it's time we discovered that. And He dwells in every one of us, but He wants that power released through us. *It's not what you do for God that counts; it's what God does in you that counts.*

And I know no better way to illustrate it than in the way I'm about to illustrate it, and I know some of you will think what I'm about to do is silly; but I'm going to do it anyway. I want to tell my coat to do a few things and see if it can do it. Now, that's always been a good coat. Let's see if it will be obedient to me. Coat, listen carefully. Coat, I would like for you to hold my Bible up high. Don't disobey me. Coat, wave your arms around. Coat, sit up straight. Have you ever seen a more disobedient coat than that? What a weak old coat! I've never seen such a disobedient weak coat as that coat. Maybe something is wrong. Let's try it a different way.

Now, coat, I'm going to ask you to do something. Coat, I want you to lift up this Bible. Look at that! Amazing! Coat, wave your arms around. What a wonderful coat! Coat,

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stand up straight. What's the difference? You say, "Oh, that's not the coat; that's you in the coat." I'm glad you got the lesson.

Friend, you want to know what Christ means to the Christian? It is *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27)—not simply dying on the cross for you two thousand years ago, but alive, living in you now. We are reconciled by His death, but we're saved by His life. We come out of Egypt by His death, but we enter Canaan in His resurrection power—after three days, anticipating a resurrected life. You see, they had been buried in the desert of mediocrity long enough. The life I now live I'm to live by the faith of the Son of God who gave Himself for me and rose to live in me. (Galatians 2:20)

III. A Call to Separation

Now, there's a third thing I want you to see about the call to conquest. Not only is it a call to preparation, and a call to anticipation, but it is a call to separation. Notice again, as we read here in Joshua chapter 1, beginning in verse 12: *"And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying, Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you."* (Joshua 1:12)

Now, for the sake of time, I'll just tell you what Moses commanded them. The tribe of Gad, and the tribe of Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh became enamored and excited about some property that was on the wrong side of Jordan, on the east side of Jordan. They were just enchanted with that fertile land, and they said to Moses—and you can read about it in Numbers chapter 32—they said to Moses, "Moses, would it be all right if we didn't go into the Promised Land? Would it be all right if we just settled on the wrong side of the Jordan River? We'd just like to stay right up on the edge, on the border of the Promised Land, without going all the way in." And do you know what Moses told them? Moses said, "If that's what you want to do, that's what you can do. But," he said, "when your brothers go in to possess the land, you're going to have to go in with them, and you're going to have to fight with them. And then, after you fight with them, and after the battle is over, you can come back and live on the other side of Jordan." And that's precisely what these people did. They preferred to live on the wrong side of Jordan. And Joshua here in the rest of this chapter is confirming their choice. And there's a separation being made of those who desire to possess the land and those who don't desire to possess it.

And do you know what's happening this morning as I'm preaching? There's a separation being made. Do you know what some of you are saying? You're' saying, "I don't want to go into Canaan—I really don't. Man, I'd like to be close; I'd like to be sitting around near you other folks who are. And, Brother Rogers, personally, I hope you'll go in, because that's the kind of preacher we want. But I don't really intend to go in. I kind of like the way I have things right here on this side of Jordan." And do you know what

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God would say to you? God would say, “Okay, if that’s what you want; if it’s the wilderness you want, it’s the wilderness you shall have.”

Now I want you to learn a great spiritual truth that’s almost a sad truth, but it’s a truth, nonetheless. Every man chooses the level of his own spiritual experience. God won’t force it on you. You can come hear sermons about Canaan and you can listen, but you can go back if you want. And God will say, “All right.” I don’t know how much of God you have, but there’s one thing I know: *you’ve got all of God you want, and if you don’t have any more, it’s because you don’t want any more.* You have failed to possess your possessions. You have failed to take God at His word; you have settled down in the wilderness. But the amazing thing about these people—the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh—the strange thing about these is that they went over and did battle with those who entered into the land. That’s the strange thing. I mean, when the other tribes went in to fight the giants, they went in, too. And yet, after the battle was over, they didn’t get the blessing; they got the barrenness. Now, that’s so strange—that’s so strange. And yet I know folks like that.

I’m looking at some of them. We get ready to go out in the action program and do battle: you’ll come along with us. Get ready to tithe and sacrifice on Love Offering day: you’ll give your money. We say, “We want you to come down here an extra night,” you’ll come. “We want you to do this or that,” you—oh, bless your heart—you’ll fight, fight, fight; you work, work, work; you’ll be so faithful; you’ll pay the price; you’ll enter into the battles; and then, Monday morning, you’ll go right back to the wilderness. Isn’t that strange? You get all the dirty work and you don’t get any of the blessings. But you know there are people like that. There are people just like Gad, and Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. They have settled on less than the best. For some reason—I don’t know why—they just think this is not really for them: “Brother Rogers is just ‘preaching.’ There is no victory. There is no Promised Land. There is no milk and honey. There are no grapes and pomegranates. There is no life of Christ alive in me right now. That’s just preaching, and I’ll be glad to help him in his church program, but after it’s over, I’ll be right back there in my wilderness.”

Conclusion

Friend, I want to tell you, that may seem like a safe course, but it’s not really a safe course. In the archives of the British Navy—the British Admiralty—there’s a story of a British ship with the ships of five other nations in a harbor in the South Pacific. A hurricane was coming, and the news came, and those other five ships began to batten down the hatches, and to put out the ropes and the anchors, and secure themselves in the harbor. But the captain on the British ship had a different strategy. And he sailed out of the harbor, not to run from the hurricane, because there was no way to do that, but

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he sailed right into the very eye of that storm. Everybody thought he was crazy. He said, "Batten her down, and we're going out." And after those mountainous waves he went, and into the howling teeth of that hurricane. And that ship shuddered, and it rolled, and it rocked, and it stretched, and creaked, and groaned, but somehow, it stayed afloat. And the storm passed by. And the captain turned around and sailed back into the harbor to see the wrecks of those five other ships on the shore.

Do you know who the very first tribes to fall were when the Assyrians came? Reuben, Gad, the half-tribe of Manasseh—the ones who failed to possess their possessions: they were the very first to go down. They stayed in what they thought was a safe harbor, but it wasn't a safe harbor. I tell you, I must fight if I must win. Increase my courage, Lord.

Listen, folks. I want to tell you there is a storm that is about to break on this earth like as the world has never known; and if you don't know that, you'd better go home and pick up your newspaper and read the weather reports. And I'm not talking about the back page; I'm talking about the headlines. And you say, "Well, I want to get out unscathed, unscarred, unbothered; I don't want any fight." Well, friend, I'm afraid you're going to end up beached on the sands of time. There's a land to possess. There's a fight to fight. There's a blessing to enjoy. And I wonder if you're willing. I wonder if you're ready. I wonder if you will make preparation. I wonder if you'll join anticipation of a resurrection life. And I wonder if you're willing to be separated and be the person your God wants you to be.

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The Transforming Power of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 16, 1994 Time: 1800

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 2

"And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."
JOSHUA 2:11

Outline

Introduction
I. The Providence That Confronted Rahab
II. The Evidence That Convicted Rahab
III. The Confidence That Converted Rahab
Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bible; find the Old Testament—the Book of Joshua—and turn to chapter 2. And, I want to speak to you tonight about "The Transforming Power of Faith"—"The Transforming Power of Faith." It's well been said that nature forms us, sin deforms us, education informs us, society reforms us, but only Jesus Christ can transform us.

In this second chapter of the Book of Joshua is the story of a lady who had a wonderful transformation. Now, we wouldn't call her a "lady" to begin with, because she was a harlot—she was a streetwalker; she was a trashy prostitute. She made her living by selling her body. She lived down in Jericho, which is near the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on earth. And, she took one of the lowest professions—that of prostitution. I guess we could call her "the shady lady of Jericho." And yet, this woman got saved—she got incredibly saved. And, when you think about it, remember that she was a pagan. She was living in spiritual darkness. She was a prostitute living in sexual degradation. And, she was also a Canaanite, destined for divine destruction, because God had said that He was going to destroy the city that she lived in. And yet, this woman that we're going to study about tonight got so radically and dramatically changed, saved, transformed, that she had a pure life. This pagan—this Canaanite—marries a prince of Israel, and are you ready for this? She—this prostitute, this Canaanite, this pagan—becomes a great, great grandmother of King David, and she also becomes a part of the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. An incredible story!

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And, when, in the Book of Hebrews, they're listing the great heroes of the faith, her name is mentioned. Now, here she's a harlot; she's a Canaanite. She's in a city marked for destruction. And, she gets saved! She goes from the house of shame to the hall of fame. She's listed in Hebrews 11 (Hebrews 11:31). She is radically, dramatically transformed—changed for God, changed for good, changed for eternity. I think that's worthy of study. I think we need to understand how this happened, how it took place. Now, there are three basic things I want you to see.

I. The Providence That Confronted Rahab

First of all, I want you to see the providence that confronted her. How did she ever even hear about God? It was providential that she was confronted with the gospel. Look, if you will, in chapter 2:1 now: *"And Joshua the son of Nun"*—that's not "none," but "Nun." I mean, he had a mama. The son of Nun—Nun is the name of his daddy—*"sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho"*—now, they're getting ready for this battle to take the city of Jericho. You know the story of the fall of the wall of Jericho, and you know all of that. But now, they send some men out to reconnoiter, to spy, to get the lay of the land, to find out what's what, and who's who, and where's where. And so, they get two men, two spies, and they say, "Go into the city and spy out the land"—*"And they went, and came into an harlot's house"*—now, they didn't go in to use her as a harlot, but people were accustomed to seeing men go in and out of her house, so that was a pretty tricky ploy. They went—*"into [a] harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there"* (Joshua 2:1). I mean, they were spending their time there in her house going in and out, and people think, "Well, she was just plying her trade, evidently."

"And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country"—somebody sniffed it out and told the king, "We've got some spies in the land"—*"And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they become to search out all [of] the country. And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: And it came to pass about the time of the shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not"*—that is, "I don't know where they went. You'd better"—*"pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof"*—so these men are up there with these long stalks of vegetation; and now, they're up there on the roof of the house. And so, she—all she does is misdirect these men coming to look for the spies—*"And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after*

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them were gone out, they shut the gate" (Joshua 2:2–7).

Now, very interesting—think of all of the people in the city of Jericho. Here is this city—great in iniquity, great in antiquity, great in enormity—and in all of the city two men go to one house. Do you think that was an accident? Do you think that it just happened by chance? No! They were divinely directed. We're going to see that this woman was already under deep spiritual conviction. We're going to come to that. It was not by mere chance that they went there. They were sent—guided—by the Holy Spirit of God. It was the providence of God that confronted her. I'm going to show you that a little bit more later—how she was under deep conviction. And, do you know, friend, that's the way the Holy Spirit of God works.

The way the Holy Spirit of God works is this—that He begins, by many, many ways, to work in the hearts and minds of people, softening them up, getting them ready for a work of God, getting them ready to be saved. And then, the God who works this side of the street in the ear of the sinner, softening that sinner's heart up, and bringing that sinner under conviction works on this side of the street in the heart of the soul winner, the messenger. And, He begins to get that person in the right stream of His will; and then, by divine providence, He brings them together. Here's someone under conviction, and here's a servant ready to be used; and God the Holy Spirit gets them together.

You can find that all the way through the Bible. For example, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch—you remember that story? There was a eunuch. He'd been to Jerusalem to worship. And, he was hungry for God, or he would not have been to Jerusalem. He had come all the way from Northern Africa, from Ethiopia, all the way to Jerusalem, the most religious city on the face of the earth. He'd been there to worship. And, on the way back, this man of affluence and wealth—he's sitting in his chariot, riding along. He's got a parchment, a scroll, of the Book of Isaiah. He's reading the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. You talk about a man that is ready—he's ready! But, he'd been to Jerusalem. He didn't get saved in Jerusalem. He'd been to the most religious city on the face of the earth, and the wells of religion were dry. And, he's riding along there.

Now, there's another man, Philip, who's in Samaria, and he's in the middle of a great revival. I mean, souls are being saved everywhere. But, God the Holy Spirit says to Philip, "Come, I want you to go down to the desert." Now, would it make sense for Billy Graham to leave a great revival crusade just to go out in a desert somewhere? Well, if he's obeying the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God is leading him, yes, it would. And so, here is Philip. He leaves this revival. He goes out there in the desert. There's one man reading the prophet Isaiah. And, the Spirit said, *"Go…join [yourself] to [that] chariot"* (Acts 8:29). And, the Bible says, *"And [he] ran"* (Acts 8:30). He had to run. The guy was on wheels. I mean, here's a passing opportunity. Thank God he saw this opportunity on wheels. He went. The Bible says he joined himself to that man. He asked him, "Do you

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understand what you're reading?" (Acts 8:30). He said, "No, how can I understand, except some man guide me?" (Acts 8:31). And, he opened at the same scripture preached unto him Jesus. That Ethiopian got saved, and history tells us that that important man opened up all North Africa to the gospel of Jesus Christ. A pretty good story—and it's a true story. But, you notice how God was working in the heart of the Ethiopian, and how God was working in the heart of Philip.

I could give you another example of this—Peter and Cornelius. Now, Cornelius was a Gentile. The Bible tells us about him in Acts 10. He was a centurion, and he was an army officer. And, he was a pagan, but he believed in God. He knew there was a God. Now, I don't know how he knew there was a God. Maybe some night as a young soldier out on a lonely sentry duty he just looked up into the starry skies, and he said, "All of that didn't just happen." There was a deep longing in his heart, as we preached this morning. The things of God are evident by the things that are made. And then, he had that inner vacuum in his heart. Remember, we talked—God has shown in them and to them. And, he must have prayed, "O God, whoever You are, wherever You are, I need to know You; I want to know You."

And then, at the same time, there was a man of God whose name was Peter. Peter was down at the seashore. And, God visited Peter with an angel, and God said to Peter, "Peter, I want you to go to the household of Cornelius, and I want you to tell him how to be saved." And, God gave Peter a vision. Then, the angel visited Cornelius and said, "Someone's going to tell you how you and your house can be saved." And, here was a man with a hungry heart. Here was the servant of God. And, God got the servant and God got the hungry man together, and Cornelius was saved (Acts 10). And, this was the beginning of the Gentile Pentecost, as the gospel was opened up to the Gentiles. I mean, you can see God working both sides of the street.

Or, again, the Lord Jesus Christ is on a journey, and the Bible says that *"he must needs go through Samaria"* (John 4:4). Well, that's not the easiest way. If you travel the Holy Land, you know the easiest way is just to take the Jordan River route. But, *"he must needs go through Samaria"* (John 4:4). Friend, that was not geography; that was the hand of God, because when Jesus was going through Samaria, you remember He sat there on the curbing of that well at Jacob's well. And, that woman came out there at noontime to draw water. She also was a woman of ill repute. She had had five husbands, living with a man now that was not her husband. The disciples had gone into the city to get some food. Jesus is out there. She comes out to draw water, and Jesus talked to her about the water of life. She gets saved and goes back into the city, and the entire city out there hears the gospel; and there's a revival. Do you think that was happenstance? No! The Holy Spirit of God engineered that. Do you think it was happenstance that those spies just simply went to that one house in all of that city? No,

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friend.

Let me tell you what will happen tomorrow in Memphis, Tennessee: the Holy Spirit of God will be working in the hearts and minds of people, and they'll be hungry to know the gospel. And, if you are being led of the Spirit of God, available to God, it just may be that God will bring you and that individual together. And, it may seem like to some people it is happenstance, but it is the divine direction. Maybe some of you kids will go back to Memphis State or the University of Memphis now, or maybe you'll go back to ECS or maybe back to Germantown High School, or Bartlett High School, and there'll be some young person there who was in church Sunday. And, you'll meet them tomorrow morning at school. And, God spoke to their heart, and their heart is warm and tender. And, you'll sit down at lunch, or you'll see that person on the football field or at band practice, and you'll have an opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, the coming together will not be an accident or an incident. It's the providence of God that brings people together.

Let me tell you something, folks: if God is not bringing you—if God is not bringing—you face-to-face with people who need the gospel, maybe you ought to ask yourself, "Why? Why? Why am I not having these opportunities?" May it be that you're not steerable, useable, and guidable? Manley Beasley used to say, "You get right with God—you'll have to backslide to keep from winning souls." Get in the stream of the Spirit. Let God use you.

Here was the providence that confronted her. This meeting was providential.

II. The Evidence That Convicted Rahab

Second thing I want you to see: not only the providence that confronted her, but I want you to see the evidence that convicted her. I told you that she was under conviction. Now, how would a prostitute, a harlot, living in a Canaanite city—how would she be under Holy Spirit conviction? How did this happen?

Well, let's continue to read. Look in verse 8: *"And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; And she said unto the men"*—I want you to listen to this conviction—*"I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side [of] Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath"* (Joshua 2:8–11).

She's under conviction. And, what brought this conviction? How could she say,

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"There is no God like Jehovah"? How is it that she can see that her only hope is Him? Why is it that she lined up with these men? Why is it that she sequesters these men? Where did a pagan get such conviction? Want me to tell you? She had seen what God was doing for His people. That was a good place for an "amen." How come I didn't get an "amen"? You didn't even say "amen." Listen, she had seen what God was doing for His people, and it brought conviction upon her. You see, listen, folks—what was the evidence that convicted her? The moving of God in the hearts, and lives, and victory of His people.

Not only are we to be witnesses—we ought to be part of the evidence. I mean, what is there about your life that is unexplainable? *Only that which is unexplainable is that that you have a right to ask people to call believable.* I mean, if you're just like everybody else… If the Israelites, coming across the desert, had just been like everybody else, there would have been no conviction in the heart of this pagan. But, you see, you could not deny God had opened the Red Sea for them. God had given them victory over mighty armies. God had marched before them. And, she said, "Hey, when we heard what your God was doing for you, our hearts did melt."

Folks, they have their eyes on us. This world has tried everything, and one more time, they're looking at us. I don't mean just Bellevue—I'm talking about Christians. It's almost as if the world is a stadium and the Christians are on the playing field. And, we try everything, done everything, and they're wondering, one more time, "Is there a God? I mean, is He real? Do these people have what they profess to have?" Is there enough evidence in the working of God in our lives to truly convict that person who lives next door, that person who works in the next office, that person who plays alongside you on that team or marches with you, high schooler, in that band? Can they see a difference? Do they see the hand of God?

One of the mightiest revivals was on the day of Pentecost, was it not? But, do you know what caused that revival? Well, the people had been loving God. They were praising God. They believed, as we heard sung, as Tara sung tonight, "Were you there when He raised up from the dead?" ("Where You There?"). They had seen Him. Their hearts were on fire. They were listening to Him. They were obeying Him. *"Tarry [at] Jerusalem, until [you] be endued with power from on high"* (Luke 29:49). And, suddenly, like a cyclone, the Holy Spirit came. A mighty rushing wind filled the house. There set upon every head cloven tongues of fire. They spoke with languages they had never learned. There were people there from every nation under Heaven; they were amazed. And, the Bible says, in Acts 2, they asked a question: *"What meaneth this?"* (Acts 2:12)—"How do you explain this? What does this mean?" They couldn't explain it. "What does this mean?" And, they preached Jesus. And then, they said in Acts 2: *"Men and brethren, what [must] we do?"* (Acts 2:37).

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First question: “What does this mean?” Second question: “What must we do?” You know what’s wrong with the twentieth-century Church? We’ve been trying to get them to ask the second question before they ever asked the first question. I mean, we want them to come to us and ask, “Now, tell me what must we do to be saved. What must we do?” But, I mean, have they seen enough in us to make them want to ask that question? I mean, Bellevue Baptist Church ought to be unexplainable. They ought to look at us—how we live, what we do, what happens in our lives, the difference in our lives—and they ought to say, “How do you explain that? What does that mean?” As we preached this morning, we ought to be ready to give an answer to every man of the hope that’s in us. And, when people begin to start asking us this question, “What does this mean?,” then they’ll begin to ask, “What must we do?” Does your next-door neighbor know that you’re saved? Is there a miraculous element in your life? Is your life supernatural, or is your life superficial? Why should they want your God? Have they heard—have they seen—what your God has done for you, and has it put them under conviction?

In another city where I used to pastor, there was a town drunk. I mean, he was a drunk. He wasn’t an alcoholic; he was a drunk. He’d get his money, put it on the counter, buy whiskey until he fell off the bar stool, when he got his paycheck. Then, they’d drag him outside, and pull him up under the packing house where they pack citrus fruit down there in Florida, and let him sleep down there with the roaches and the sand gnats and mosquitoes. He’d wake up, stagger home bleary-eyed. His name was Al Cross—town drunk, hopeless drunk. God gave me the joy and the privilege of leading Al Cross to Jesus Christ. Al Cross got saved, and when he got saved, it was his last drink. Now, God doesn’t always do it that way, but He did it for Al Cross. I mean, he was miraculously saved, transformed. He said, “I’ve been all over.” He told me later on, “I’d been to other places. I’d go to these places, detox places. I’d go to these different programs. I’d get educated and then come back.” He said, “I’d go away a dumb drunk, come back an educated alcoholic, but I was still the same, until I found Jesus.” And, Jesus saved him. Everybody knew he’d been saved. He finally became a deacon in our church—one of the finest soul winners I’ve ever known, one of the most radiant Christians, one of the most victorious Christians I’ve ever known. Al’s in Heaven now. But, everybody in the city of Fort Pierce knew that Al had been saved.

Now, in that same city, there was another man. I want to tell you about him. I used to have a radio program called “Daybreak.” And, I would preach many times live on that radio station. Sometimes I would break by tape. But, I would preach on WARN at 6:45 every morning. Then, I would meet some men at the church for prayer, and we were praying for revival in our city. And, Al was one of those men. And, we were talking about having revival and how would we have revival in that city, and somebody said, “You know, I’ve read that one way to have revival is to have some miracle conversions—to

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find the meanest man in the city and get him saved." Well, we said, "Well, who is the meanest man in the city?" So, we had an election. There were nominations, and there were votes. And, finally, there was a man who was elected "the meanest man in the city," and he was a mean man. I mean, he was a barroom brawler. He was a moonshiner. He was a gunfighter and adulterer. He was brazen. He stole a hog out of the back of the game warden's truck, one time. He was a gambler. As a matter of fact, at this particular time, he had a bullet lodged in his hip. A woman had shot him. The reason why she shot him was she was jealous. He was spending too much time with his wife; and so, she shot him. And, he had this bullet in his hip that the doctors felt would be a little dangerous to take out, so he had the bullet in his hip. So, we said, "Well, let's begin to pray for him. Let's begin to pray that he'll get saved." So, morning after morning after morning, we prayed for this man who'd won the election. Then, after we prayed long enough, they said, "Well, we believe, Pastor, you're the one that needs to go see him." Frankly, you know, I was intimidated because I'd heard so much. I'd never met him.

I went up and knocked on the door of his house. His wife came to the door. I said, "I'm here to see thus-and-such-a-person. Is he here?" She said, "Well, they're in the back room back there. They're gambling, fighting, and drinking." And, she said, "They're mean. I wouldn't go back there if I were you." So, I didn't. I just went off (chicken).

Then, later on, I decided I'd go back. I went back to see this man. By then, he'd been shot. He was shot after my first visit. He was in the hospital. I went to the hospital. I decided I wouldn't beat around the bush; I wouldn't try to be cute. We'd soaked him in prayer—soaked him in prayer. I went to his bedside. I said, "Sir, my name is Adrian Rogers. I'm a Baptist preacher. I have been praying for you. I want you to be saved. Do you want to be saved?" You know what he said to me? He said, "If God could do for me what He did for Al Cross, I'd surely want to be saved." And, I said, "He can do it." And, he fell off in my hand just like a ripe apple. It was like taking candy from a baby. He was the meanest man.

Now, what was it? What convicted him? He saw his old drinking buddy, his pal, Al, changed. He saw what God could do. Friend, the greatest argument for Christianity and the greatest argument against Christianity is the life of a Christian. It all depends on how he's living. If you name the name of Jesus Christ and you're not living, walking, talking victory, you are doing so much to hold back the power of God in revival. But oh, if you name the name of Jesus Christ and there is in your life something that is absolutely, totally, inexplicable, then God will use you.

See the providence that confronted her. See the evidence that convicted her.

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III. The Confidence That Converted Rahab

The third thing I want you to see is the confidence that converted her as she got saved, and what was it? Well, continue to read here in chapter 2, now, and verse 12. She's under conviction; she wants to be delivered, so here's what she says: *"Now therefore, I pray you"*—she's talking to these men—*"swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death"* (Joshua 2:12–13). Fast-forward to verse 17: *"And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this [thy] oath which thou hast made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window"* (Joshua 2:17–21). Now, part of it says "a thread," but it was a rope strong enough to let the men down by.

And, what is the significance of this? I mean, is this all just happenstance? Did the Holy Spirit just write this because it happened to be interesting? No—no! The Bible tells us in the Book of Hebrews that she was justified by faith (Hebrews 11:31)—I mean, justified. Now, we're not just talking about somebody coming out of danger, not just that her physical life was spared from the invasion by the Israeli—but she was saved by faith.

The scarlet thread in the window—well, what does that remind you of? Remember that these spies had come out of the land of Egypt before they entered into the land of Jericho. And, when they came out of Egypt, God said, "I want you to take a lamb. I want you to slay that lamb, and I want you to put the blood of that lamb upon the doorposts and the lintel of the house. And, when I see that scarlet blood—when I see the blood," God said, "I will pass over you." You can read that in Exodus 12:13: *"when I see the blood, I will pass over you."* These men said, "Hey, it's the blood that delivers. Put the scarlet thread in the window"—scarlet (the color of blood)—"Let it stand for the blood of the Lamb. You will come into covenant with those people who are under the blood."

You see, from Genesis to Revelation, there's a scarlet thread through the Bible. I mean, you see it in Adam's coat, when God covered Adam with a coat in the Garden of Eden. It was a fur coat, by the way; if you don't believe in wearing fur, you can take it up

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with God. It's a fur coat—yeah, it was a fur coat. And, Adam wore a garment from an animal that had been slain to cover his nakedness, and blood was shed. And then, Abel offered a lamb upon an altar—the firstlings of the flock. When Noah came out of the ark, he offered a blood sacrifice. Abraham saw a ram there that took the place of Isaac there upon Mount Moriah. Before the Jews came out of Egypt, there was the Passover lamb. All of the temple sacrifices were sacrifices of blood, some—many of them—that pointed to Calvary's cross. And, when you get to the Book of Revelation, you see the redeemed singing, "You have redeemed us with Your blood" (Revelation 5:9). From Genesis to Revelation there is this scarlet thread. Why? Because Hebrews 9:22 says, *"Without shedding of blood [there] is no remission."* And, every page of the divine book is stained with the scarlet blood of Jesus.

What was the confidence that converted her? It was confidence in the blood. You see, listen—Hebrews 11:31 says, *"By faith [this] harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not."*

There's a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains
WILLIAM COWPER

Now, she was made pure. She's no longer a harlot. She's a princess in Israel. She's the great, great grandmother of King David. She's in the house and lineage of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. She has been changed. Remember what I told you: nature forms us, sin deforms us, education informs us, society reforms us, but Christ transforms us.

Conclusion

You know what the message is tonight? It's a message to the saved and the lost. You know what it is to the saved? We want to be ready so God can use us. We want to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God and get in the stream of the Spirit so when God, over here, is working to soften up a heart, God, over here, is working on us to get us together. We want that to be true in our lives. And, we want to be living such lives that our lives will be an evidence of the gospel that we preach.

But, I tell you, there's another message tonight if you're not a Christian. If you're not a Christian, tonight, I want to tell you something: the God that saved the meanest man in that city that I told you about, the God that saved the man Al Cross that I told you about, and the God that saved a mean teenage boy named Adrian Rogers, and the God who has saved millions, and the God who saved most of the people in this building tonight, and the God who can do anything is the God who'll save you tonight.

You say, "Well, Pastor, I'm not a harlot." It doesn't make any difference. In John 3, Nicodemus—a very religious, a very cultured man—got saved. In John 4, the woman at the well, who had been married five times and was living with a man who was not her

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husband, got saved—the up-and-out and the down-and-out. Now, you come up close, and I want to tell you something: if you're not saved, *there's no one so bad they cannot be saved and no one so good they need not be saved*—no one so bad they cannot be saved and no one so good they need not be saved.

Do you know why I like the gospel? You know what one of the privileges is of preaching for a long time? You can look back and see the proof-positive of the transforming power of this book. Hey folks, I've preached it long enough. I've got enough evidence that I could just start here with this guy right here. Isn't that true? Amen. Stand up. I mean, right here—Jesus saved you. Talk into the mic. Amen—amen. God saved him good. I mean, he was a rat. I was like Al Cross. He was just like Al Cross. What I'm saying is true, isn't it? Amen. Wes, is what I'm saying true? Amen. George, is what I'm saying true? Amen. Hallelujah! Judy, did Jesus save him? Amen. Are you glad? Amen. Hallelujah! He saved you, Jesse? Stand up here. Speak into the mic and tell us what Jesus did for you. Where is it? Talk right there. Oh, okay. Oh, God bless you. Amen. Well, I don't see how anyone in the world can sit under this man and not get saved. Amen. I'll take you with me. Amen.

Hey, listen—God is in the saving business. There's the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it saves—the transforming power of the gospel. I mean, you think about it—here she was, a harlot, a Canaanite, a pagan, and becomes a great, great grandmother to King David and in the lineage of Jesus Christ. What a mighty God we serve! What a mighty God we serve! And, He'll save you tonight, if you trust Him—I'll promise you on the authority of the Word of God. The Bible says it was by faith that she was saved (Hebrews 11:31). Not anything good about her—by faith.

There was the providence that confronted her. And, by providence, you're here tonight. There was the evidence that convicted her, and there was the confidence that converted her. She put her faith in Jesus.

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The Transforming Power of the Gospel

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 19, 1977 Time: 00AM

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 2

"And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window."
JOSHUA 2:21

Outline

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I. The Providence That Confronted Rahab
II. The Evidence That Convicted Rahab
III. The Confidence That Confronted Rahab
Conclusion

Introduction

And now, take your Bibles and turn to the book of Joshua, would you, please. We're on a journey with Joshua, and it's been thrilling. Already we've studied one whole chapter, and now we come to chapter 2, as we're preaching through the book of Joshua. And today, I want to speak to you on "The Transforming Power of the Gospel"—The Transforming Power of the Gospel." And I read, beginning in Joshua chapter 2, verse 1: *"And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: and it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate."* (Joshua 2:1–7)

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Now, today, I have said we're thinking about "The Transforming Power of the Gospel," and we're going to see in our story how a prostitute, Rahab the harlot, "the shady lady from Jericho," came to know Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and Lord. And it's going to be a thrilling, wonderful, exciting story.

Somebody has well said that, "Nature forms us; sin deforms us; prisons try to reform us; education informs us; but only Christ can transform us." And we need to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ. And I want you to think about this woman named Rahab the harlot. I want you to think about her desperate situation. She was a pagan living in spiritual darkness. She was a harlot living in sinful depravity. She was a Canaanite destined for sure destruction. She was a woman that desperately needed God to do something for her. And yet, as we study the Bible today, we're going to find out that Rahab the harlot was transformed by the power of Almighty God. And such a wonderful transformation it is! Rather than being destined for divine destruction, she is spared—she and her household. No longer is she a harlot, but we're going to find out that she becomes happily married—married to, of all people, a prince from Israel. No longer is she an outcast, but she becomes a part of the house and lineage of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. She becomes an ancestor in the flesh to the Lord Jesus Christ. She became the great-great-grandmother of King David—and Jesus was born of the house and lineage of David.

Here is a woman who is transformed, and wonder of wonders, and glory of glories, when we read in the Bible in Hebrews chapter 11 where our Lord is listing all of the great heroes of the faith—when He talks about Moses, and when He talks about Abraham, and when He talks about the other great heroes of the faith—guess whose name appears in God's Hall of Fame? Rahab the harlot! From the house of shame to the Hall of Fame! Now, that's a pretty good transformation, isn't it? I tell you, that's something pretty wonderful–isn't it?—that God could take this Canaanite woman, a pagan living in darkness, living in depravity, living with such a horrible, awful occupation, and change her, and transform her, and make her an ancestor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ according to the flesh!

I. The Providence That Confronted Rahab

The transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ is seen here in the second chapter of the book of Joshua. And we're going to give our study this morning under three headings, the first of which is this: the providence that confronted her.

Now I've just read to you in chapter 2, verses 1 through 7, how two spies came into the house of Rahab. Joshua had sent these spies out, and General Joshua thought that it would be a good thing to send spies out to spy out the land before Jericho was destroyed under the judgment of God. And so these two spies go, and it's not by mere

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coincidence, it is not by happenstance, that they've come to the house of Rahab. Now, in that house was a sinful woman—a depraved woman, a woman who deserved the judgment of God—but there was something different about Rahab than all the other inhabitants of the city of Jericho. She had a heart that was hungry for God. And do you know you never would have known it had you just simply looked at her? You would have said, "Oh, there is a wicked person; there's a vile, lascivious person."

But, oh, I want to tell you, dear friend, that God loves the deepest sinner. And here was a woman loved of God, and here was a woman whose heart wanted to know God. In spite of her depravity, in spite of her sin, there was hunger in her heart to know God. And we're going to see that in just a moment. And here was a woman under deep conviction of sin, and here was a woman who knew that she deserved the judgment of God, but she wanted the mercy and the kindness of God.

But the remarkable thing to me is that in a city as vast as the city of ancient Jericho was, with all of the homes in Jericho, and all of the people in Jericho, the providence of God confronted her with the gospel of God. She is confronted by providence. I'm talking about the strange working of God. It wasn't by chance, I say, that these spies came to her house. It was in the providence of God.

I want you to learn a lesson this morning. I want you to know how the Holy Spirit works in bringing people to Himself. First of all, the Holy Spirit begins to work in the heart of a lost sinner, and the Holy Spirit brings circumstances and events, and what we would call happenstance, to work upon that person's life, until that person is softened up, until that person's heart is prepared, until that person is hungry to know the gospel. That's what the Holy Spirit is doing over here in the heart of the sinner. And then, over here in the heart of the soul winner, the Lord is taking a soul winner, and He's getting that soul winner ready. And then, what many people think is a chance meeting, what many people think is just happenstance, is God who masterminds the whole thing. And in the providence of God, the lost person is confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to see that as it happens all through the Bible. For example, do you remember when Philip, God's evangelist, was down in Samaria? You remember in Acts the eighth chapter Philip was an evangelist, he was preaching in Samaria, and God was giving a great and gracious and glorious revival meeting, and many hundreds were being saved by God. The Holy Spirit, by His providence, said, "Philip, go out into the desert." Now, that didn't make sense, at least to Philip; but it made sense to the providential ways of God: "Go out into the desert down to Gaza." And so, Philip left the revival meeting where he was the evangelist and went out into the desert. At the same time, God was working in the heart of a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch who was a very important man. He was the Mr. Lance of his day: he was the treasurer. And he was out there in the desert, and he was studying the Bible. But he didn't understand it. And it's

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just so strange to us. We would say, “What a coincidence! What a coincidence that Philip and the eunuch came together at that particular spot!” Not a coincidence at all: that eunuch was confronted by the providence of God. (Acts 8:5–40)

Or let me tell you another story. Do you remember Cornelius in the tenth chapter of Acts? Cornelius was a centurion; he was an army officer of the Italian band; he was a Gentile, what we would call a pagan. But Cornelius had a hunger to know God. Where he got it, I don’t know, because he didn’t have the Scriptures that the Jews had. But one night, perhaps out on a lonely sentry duty, Cornelius looked up at those stars, and he said, “Oh, that didn’t just happen. O God, whoever you are, I want to know you.” And God begins to move heaven and earth to get the gospel to him, because his heart is being prepared. And so God sends Cornelius some angels to speak to him; and God sends Simon Peter, the preacher of vision; and God gets Cornelius and Simon Peter together; and Cornelius is saved—he’s born again by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It wasn’t happenstance that got this Jewish Simon Peter together with this Gentile, this pagan; it was the providence of God. (Acts 10)

Or I want you to think about our Lord Jesus Christ. He’s taking a journey, and the disciples, who so hated the Samaritans, they were filled with racial prejudice because of the Samaritans. They hated the Samaritans. But Jesus, the Bible says of Him, *“And he must needs go through Samaria.”* (John 4:4) That need was not geographical; that need was providential, because there He met that woman, the woman at Sychar. She was kind of like Rahab: she’d been married five times, and was living with a man who was not her husband at that time. And you would have said the Lord didn’t care about her. But the Lord cared very much for her. And the Lord Jesus Christ met her there at noontime there by the well, and that woman had a drink from that well that never shall run dry. She found the water of life, because in the providence of God she was convicted and converted, confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, what am I saying? The same Lord that brought those spies to the house of Rahab, the same Lord that brought Philip to the Ethiopian, the same Lord that brought Peter to Cornelius, the same Lord that brought Jesus to that woman at the well, is working in Memphis, Tennessee. Do you want me to tell you how the Holy Spirit wants to bring people to Him in this city right now? Right now the Holy Spirit is working in the hearts and lives of people in this city. Out yonder in our city right now He’s working. They’re getting convicted—maybe by an automobile wreck, maybe by a domestic problem, maybe by a sweet blessing, maybe the birth of a child into the home, maybe, who knows how the Holy Spirit is working to prepare hearts? And at the same time, the Lord is wanting some people just like you, and you, and you, and you—He wants to use you.

Do you know why the Lord used these two spies as He did? Do you know why they

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were ready to give such wonderful advice to Rahab as they gave to Rahab? Because in chapter 1 of this book of Joshua they had said, “Oh, that which the Lord our God has said, we’ll do.” (Joshua 1:16) They were available. And I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman, what our God is looking for today is some people not with ability but with availability, people who just simply say, “Lord, if you’re preparing someone’s heart tomorrow, and you want to use me—what some people might think is just a happenstance: where we stopped for coffee; what somebody might think is just a chance meeting: where I drive into a service station; what somebody might think is just coincidence—O God, I know that just as you brought those spies to the house of Rahab the harlot, O God, you can guide my life if I’m surrendered to you. I believe out yonder in our city tomorrow there are multiplied thousands of people whose hearts the Holy Spirit has softened. And what God is looking for are some people who will say, “O God, I want you to use me. God, I want to be available.” It was providence that confronted her.

II. The Evidence That Convicted Rahab

Now, the second thing I want you to notice in our story this morning: Not only the providence that confronted her, but I want you to notice the evidence that convicted her—the evidence that convicted her. Have you ever wondered how could a pagan—a Canaanite, a prostitute—how could she ever have such conviction that she would want to be saved? She did have deep conviction.

Let’s continue to read in the Bible—Joshua chapter 2, beginning in verse 8: *“And before they were laid down, she”*—that is, Rahab—*“came up unto them upon the roof; and she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.”* (Joshua 2:8–11)

Now, what caused her to have this conviction? What caused her to know that God had given to the Israelites this Promised Land? What caused her to know that Jericho was a lost cause? What caused her to know that God is such a great God? Listen to her confession of faith in the last part of verse 11: *“For the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.”* How did she know that? I don’t think she’d gone to Vacation Bible School. How did she know that? Well, I’ll tell you how she knew it. She knew it by observing the miracles that God had done in the hearts and lives of His

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people.

Now, listen. Are you listening? We're talking about the evidence that convicted her. What was the evidence that was convicting her? The miracles that God was doing for His people. Look in verse 10: *"For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan."* What she has said is: "We've been getting reports on you folks; we've had our spies out, too; and we know what God is doing in your lives." There is something miraculous about the lives of the people of God. And when she saw something miraculous about the lives of the people of God, it brought her under conviction.

Are you listening to me? Do you want me to know the greatest sermon that Bellevue Baptist Church will issue? It's not the one from this pulpit on Sunday; it's the one from your lives on Monday. Are you listening? I am saying that when this city sees in the hearts and lives of the people of God some miracles, they're going to say there's a God in heaven.

That's what convicted Rahab the harlot: not a sermon that the spies preached but a life that the people of God were living—a miraculous life. God was working miracles in their lives, and they'd heard how God was opening Red Seas for them and how God was defeating enemies for them. You see, ladies and gentleman, not only are we supposed to be witnesses; we're supposed to be part of the evidence, as well. God ought to be doing something in our lives that cannot be explained.

I want to ask you a question: What is there about your life that cannot be explained? What is there about your life that cannot be explained? What is there about the life of this church that cannot be explained apart from program and planning and propaganda and personnel and paraphernalia? What is there about the lives that we're living that when people see us, they say, "The Lord your God is with you; there's something different about your life"? And when people can see that there is something different about our lives, they're going to want the God that we have.

I want to show you something very interesting. Turn to Acts chapter 2 for just a moment—Acts chapter 2, that amazing day of Pentecost. We have people praying, "O God, send us another Pentecost." We don't need another one; we need to enjoy the one we have. We don't need another Calvary; we don't need another Pentecost. But, oh, thank God for the power of Pentecost. That's what we need. And on the day of Pentecost something very miraculous happened. God was with His people, that first century church. And I want you to notice in Acts chapter 2, verse 12, on that day of Pentecost when those miraculous events began to take place in the hearts and lives of God's people, the Bible says in verse 12, *"And they were all amazed…"*—who was amazed? Not the people of God, but the unsaved people—*"they were all amazed, and*

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were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" (Acts 2:12)

You see, what had happened is this: Those 120 disciples had been together praying and asking God to bless their lives. They were loving the Lord Jesus. They were loving one another. God the Holy Spirit descended upon them in miraculous power. The very place where they were sitting was filled with a cyclonic wind, the sound of a mighty rushing wind. There sat upon every one of their heads flames of fire; they looked like human candles. They began to stand up and preach the Word of God and to glorify in God in languages known to men, but unknown to them, not previously learned; they spoke in foreign languages. It was an amazing service, a supernatural service. And those people who came looked around, and in Acts chapter 2, verse 12, they said, *"What meaneth this?"* Here was something they could not explain, and they were bewildered. Is it any wonder that soon they're asking another question? Look in verse 37 and see the second question: *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37)

Now I want you to listen, and listen carefully. They asked two questions—question number one: "What does this mean?"; question number two: "What must we do?" Do you know the problem with the twentieth-century church? We have been trying to get them to ask the second question before they've asked the first question. We're trying to get men and women to say, "What must I do to be saved?" before they've seen anything in us that amazes them. You know, when they see something in us that they can't explain; when they see a quality of life in Adrian Rogers, and Tommy Lane, and the rest of us that they can't explain; when they say, "There's something about that guy that I just don't understand: what does it mean?" it won't be long before I'll be telling them how to be saved, amen? But if they can't see any difference in us; I mean, if we're just like the world, if we look like the world, talk like the world, dress like the world, sometimes even smell like the world… Boy, I'm glad my wife doesn't smoke. I'd hate to kiss my wife and smell a Camel. There's nothing different about us sometimes. There's nothing in our lives that cannot be explained. I mean, we're just like everybody else. And yet we're telling men, "You need Jesus." One cynic said, "If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you're going to have to look a little more redeemed."

What was the evidence that convicted her? What was it that struck terror in her heart? What was it? I say she saw in the lives of the people of God the power of God that was inexplicable and that brought conviction to her heart. The providence that confronted her was that God had some people that He could use. The evidence that convicted her was that these people had been transformed. They'd had a Red Sea experience; they'd had a blood-of-the-Lamb experience. They had had the power of God upon them, and upon their life. I believe when people see this, they'll want to be

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saved.

When I was in a little town down in Florida preaching, I had a little church down there, and I pastored a little church. People say, “Oh, you folks in big churches, you don’t understand a little church.” Folks, when I got the church staff together here at Bellevue in one room, I said, “I want you to know I’ve pastored churches smaller than this.” And I have. I mean, just the staff. And I had a little church down in Florida, and it was a blessed church, a sweet church. And there’s nothing wrong with a big church, and there’s nothing wrong with a small church; but there’s something wrong with a church that’s not growing when there are lost people round about it.

Now we had a little church, and God was blessing, and I had a radio program. I preached every morning at 6:45, a program I called “Daybreak,” and preached it live. And then after that, I met with some of the brothers who loved the Lord, and we had a little prayer meeting every morning. And God blessed that prayer meeting. We got to talking about revival in our little town in South Florida, and one of the men said, “I’ve learned that the way to have revival in a town is to get the meanest man in town saved.” “Well,” we said, “let’s start praying that God will save the meanest man in town then.”

But then we got to thinking. We didn’t know who the meanest man in town was. So we decided to do some research. And so we did some research there, and we said, “Now, y’all do some research, and come back, and we’ll hold an election.” So they came back, and they voted, and one man won, hands down. I think he was unanimous as the meanest man in town.

This fellow was a remarkable man. He was a man filled with racial hate. He was also a man who was a moonshiner and a liquor distributor. He was also a man who was into gambling very deeply. He was also a man who loved to get in barroom brawls and fights and pistol fights. He was also a man who was living with another man’s wife, not his own wife; and as a matter of fact, that woman had just shot him. There was a bullet still lodged in his hip. The doctor didn’t feel that they could remove it for some particular reason—I don’t know what. You know why the woman shot him? Here’s why the woman shot him—this was his girlfriend, not his wife—she shot him because she was jealous of his wife. He’d been spending too much time with his wife, and so she shot him. That kind of guy! Listen. This fellow stole a hog out of the back of the game warden’s truck. That’s the kind of guy he was.

One time I had been by to visit him before, and I went by the house to see him. And his wife met me at the door, and I said, “Is thus-and-such a person home?” She said, “Well, he and some other men are in the back room there gambling and drinking moonshine whiskey and cursing.” She said, “I don’t think it would be good for you to go back there.” So I didn’t. That’s the kind of guy he was.

And so we just decided that we would pray that God would save the meanest man in

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town. And those men—I don't take a lot of credit for it; I believe it's their faith—they began to pray that God would save this man, transform him—a most unlikely man. I would say in worse condition than Rahab was.

But we had another man in that little prayer group. His name was Al Cross. Al Cross had been our town's most notorious alcoholic, a drunkard. Now you talk about a drunkard: he didn't just drink at home; he would go to the tavern, put his paycheck on the counter after he got it cashed—his money there—and drink until he would pass out and fall off the stool, and they'd just drag him out and leave him outside underneath the eaves of the house or up under the gutter somewhere. Poor Al Cross found Jesus as his personal Savior. I had the joy of praying with him when he received the Lord. You've never seen such a transformation. The Lord took Al Cross, this man. He told me, "You know, preacher, I used to go away for these cures." And, folks, I'm not against that; I thank God for those who work with them. He said, "You know what they did?" He said, "I used to go away a dumb drunk, and I came back an educated alcoholic. But," he said, "you know, they told me all about it, but I still didn't have the power. And then," he said, "one day I found Jesus Christ." I wish you could hear Al Cross give his testimony. Oh, what a preacher of the gospel he is! And he's been on the wagon now for twenty years living for the Lord Jesus Christ.

But anyway, Al was in that prayer meeting. And Al went by to see the meanest man. Then I went by to see him. I walked up to his house remembering that we had prayed for him. I knocked on the door not knowing what to expect. I was welcomed in with a smile. I went into see him and I said, "Sir, I'm not going to beat around the bush. I have come to talk to you about the Lord Jesus Christ and about being saved." When I said that, he looked at me with all seriousness and all earnestness, and he said, "If I thought that God could do for me what he's done for Al Cross, I'd want him to do it in a minute." Isn't that something? Isn't that something? The meanest man in town. Why, when he came to Jesus, it was like leading a little boy to Jesus Christ—gloriously saved, and his life was transformed. And he went on to live for the Lord Jesus Christ—the meanest man in town.

What was the evidence that convicted him? Not one of my sermons from a pulpit. But he had seen in the heart and in the life of Al Cross, a man that he knew; he saw something of the power of God, something he couldn't explain.

Now, let me tell you something, folks. *Our world is not waiting for a new definition of the gospel. Our world is waiting for a new demonstration of the gospel. Our world is waiting for an army, a generation of people who rise up and live transformed lives.* You say, "Well I haven't been an alcoholic. What kind of a miracle can I have?" How about learning to return good for evil? That would be a pretty good one, wouldn't it? How about learning to love those who despitefully use you, and to turn the other cheek,

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and to show kindness, and let the love of the Lord Jesus Christ flow out of our lives?

III. The Confidence That Confronted Rahab

The providence that confronted her. The evidence that convicted her. And now, finally, I want you to see the confidence that converted her—the confidence that converted her. You see, she was saved not by works but by faith. And the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 11 that it was faith that transformed this woman's life. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 31: *"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not."* (Hebrews 11:31) Her faith, not her good works—her confidence in Almighty God—was what converted her.

And begin reading now in Joshua chapter 2. Let's begin reading in verse 12 as we continue our study this morning. Joshua chapter 2, and verse 12—she's talking to the spies—in verse 11, she says, "I know that your God is the true God"—and she says in verse 12, *"Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."* (Joshua 2:12–13)

And then I want to go to verse 17: *"And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window."* (Joshua 2:17–21)

Now, what was the scarlet line? These men had gone down on a rope outside in order to escape, and Rahab says, "Now, look. I want to be saved. I want the mercy—the blessings, the kindness—of God upon me." And they said, "Very well, but if you want God to deliver you, you take this scarlet rope." It was not a thread, as the King James says, because it was a rope that they could go up and down on. You take this scarlet line—this rope—and you tie it in your window; and when the army of the Israelites comes against Jericho, everyone will be told that when they see a scarlet cord in the window, they're to skip over that house, and everybody in that house where the scarlet cord is will be saved.

What does that scarlet cord stand for? Bless your hearts, you ought to know. It

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stands for the blood of Jesus Christ. That's what it stands for! It's an Old Testament picture of the blood. You see, these Jews who told her this had the experience of the Passover. And the Lord had said to them, "You put the scarlet blood of the lamb on the doorpost of your house, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you." And this scarlet line was to be to Rahab what that scarlet blood was to them: it spoke of the blood. And just as the Israelites passed over Rahab's house, the death angel had passed over the Israelites' house in the day of the Passover. And all of that speaks of the blood of the lamb, for the Bible says, *"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."* (1 Corinthians 5:7) Here's an Old Testament picture of redemption by the blood. For the Bible says, *"Without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22)

Folks, I want to tell you, you're not going to heaven by your good works. You're not going to heaven by being baptized. *You could be baptized so many times the tadpoles have your social security number and still not go to heaven.* You're not saved by paying your tithe. You're not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. There's only one thing that can redeem us all—and it's the blood of Jesus Christ. For God's Word says, *"Without shedding of blood is no remission"* of sin. What was it that transformed Rahab the harlot? The blood of Jesus. You say, "Wait a minute. Jesus had not even died." I want to tell you the Bible says, in the heart and mind of God, that Christ was slain before *"the foundation of the world."* (Revelation 13:8) And Rahab the harlot was saved by looking forward to the blood of Christ just as we're saved by looking backward to the blood of Christ.

God only has one plan of salvation: it's the blood-sprinkled way. "There's power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb." "Oh, what can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." And, oh, what did the blood do for Rahab? Not only did it deliver her; it transformed her. It wasn't just judgment that she escaped; she became a pure, virtuous woman—the great-great-grandmother of King David. I like that song, Brother Tommy, that says, "Be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure." Oh, I want to tell you, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."* (Romans 1:16) *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:18)

And Rahab may not have understood it all. I didn't understand it all when I gave my heart to Jesus. I was spiritually ignorant, but I had a hungry heart. I was in a meeting, and the preacher preached and gave an invitation, and my own dear daddy—and by the way, thank you for praying for him, and he's doing so much better; thank the Lord for that—my own dear daddy stepped out and gave his heart to Jesus Christ. And when I saw God working a miracle in his heart, that was the evidence that convicted me. And I stepped out and gave my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, oh, there was a lot I didn't

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understand, but I gave my hand to my pastor, and my heart to God in that little weak, childlike faith that I had. The Lord Jesus came into my heart, and, bless God, He started a work that He's not finished with yet. "*He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:6) And the same gospel that transformed Rahab so long ago is the gospel that's transforming me today. And I just want to say, "Thank God for the blood of Jesus; thank God that Jesus died in agony and blood upon that cross."

But I want you to notice something about Rahab the harlot. Not only did she confess her faith secretly, but she confessed it outwardly and openly. She hung a scarlet line in the window, not in the closet—outwardly, openly, publicly, unashamedly, she declares, "Here's a house under the blood." Those Israelites were to put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the house where everyone could see it. Have you been ashamed to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Or have you tied a scarlet cord in the window? Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me before men, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38)

And I want to tell you, He's coming, dear friend. And I hope there's a scarlet line tied openly and publicly when God's angel of judgment comes—and He's coming soon. Don't you have a feeling He's coming soon? Have you got a line tied in the window? Have you? Oh, when the judgment comes—and judgment is coming, surely coming—have you got a line tied in the window? Is your home under the blood? Are your loved ones in that home under the blood of the Lord Jesus? You say, "Well, I don't see why I have to make such a public show of it." I'm glad Rahab didn't say that.

I heard long ago a story of young lady in a revival crusade who was under deep conviction. And some of the brethren saw her crying, and they went back to witness to her and invited her to come forward in the service and confess Christ as her personal Savior and Lord. She through the tears shook her head and said, "Oh no, there are too many people. I could never do that. Can't I be saved back here?" And they said to her "No. If you want to be saved, you must come forward."

Now I know what you're thinking, but let me finish the story. They said, "No, you can't be saved back here." So, the next night, she was under deeper conviction. They went back and spoke with her again. But again she said, "Oh, I want to be saved." But she said, "I'm a timid soul. Can't I be saved back here?" And they said, "No." The third night, her poor heart was about to break. They went back and said, "Won't you come and confess Christ openly and publicly as your Lord?" Do you know what she said? She said, "Yes, I will." She said, "I'll go anywhere, I will do anything, if I can just have peace with God." They smiled and said, "Now you don't need to come to the front: you can be saved back here."

Oh, do you understand what I am talking about, dear friend? Jesus said, "If you're

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ashamed of me and of my words before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38) I want to tell you that the faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to heaven. If you're ashamed of Him, He'll be ashamed of you. For the Scripture saith, *"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."* (Romans 10:11)

Conclusion

One last word, and I'm finished. There are some of you who may be thinking, "Now, Brother Rogers, what you say is all right for a person like Rahab. She needed to be changed, but not me. I would never do what she's done. I'm a very cultured person. I'm a good person. I have nice manners, and I have nice morals, and I don't need the gospel." Do you know what Jesus Christ said when He was here on earth? Jesus looked at the self-righteous people of His day, and Jesus said to them, *"The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you"* (Matthew 21:31)—"the harlots will go to heaven before some of you self-righteous people, because at least they know they are sinners and will call upon God to save them." *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) And I want to tell you that the worst form of badness is not prostitution; *the worst form of badness is human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.*

And God has said, *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you."* (Exodus 12:13) It was the blood that saved her. It was the power of that blood that transformed her and took her from the house of shame to God's Hall of Fame. Thank God for the transforming power of the gospel.

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The Scarlet Thread Through the Bible

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 18, 1977 Time: 1800

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 2:18–24

"Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee."
JOSHUA 2:18

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Introduction

Turn with me to Joshua, please, and chapter 2, and we'll have part two of this morning's message as we're thinking on "The Scarlet Thread through The Bible." Joshua chapter 2, beginning in verse 18: *"Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee*

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in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window." (Joshua 2:18–22)

If you were here this morning, you'd know that the *she* refers to Rahab the harlot, the one who was transformed by that wonderful grace that Jim Whitmire just sang about. Here was a woman, a Canaanite woman; here was a woman destined for destruction, with the judgment of God hanging heavily over her head. Here was a woman in darkness and depravity, living a life of immorality; a harlot, and yet she was transformed by the grace of God. Here was a woman whose sins were forgiven; here was a woman who was brought into the commonwealth of Israel. Here was a woman no longer a harlot, but she is married to a prince in Israel. Here is a woman so dramatically changed that she's brought into the very bloodline of our Savior and is an ancestor to the Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh—the great-great-grandmother of King David. Here was a woman who, when you read the genealogy of Christ, you will read her name. And when you turn to Hebrews chapter 11 and read the roll call of the great saints of all of the ages who live by faith, you'll read of Rahab the harlot. And the way that she was delivered was by tying a scarlet cord in her window—a rope, a line, in her window. And we told you this morning that that line represented the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that's not some fancy interpretation, in my estimation; for the ones who told her to do that had also had an experience very similar. They had come out of the land of Egypt, and the Lord had told them to take the blood of the lamb and put it upon the doorpost and the lintels of their house, and when that angel of judgment came through the land, he would pass over them. And they said to her, "Now, you tie a scarlet cord in your window, and when the instrument of God's justice comes through Jericho, we will pass over your house, and you'll be safe, if you're in that house." And I believe, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that that scarlet line to her was what the blood of the lamb was to those Egyptians, and that blood of the lamb to those Israelites. And that blood of the lamb pointed toward the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) For the Bible tells us in the book of 1 Corinthians, *"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."* (1 Corinthians 5:7)

And so, tonight, it is my intention to show you that all of the Bible is about Christ and about His blood redemption. There are two threads that run all the way through the Bible: one is the scarlet thread of blood redemption; the other is the golden thread of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, oh, how wonderful it is to trace both of these things all the way through the Bible!

Do you know what builds a great church? The book, the blood, and the blessed

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hope: when we take a stand for the fact that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God; when we preach blood redemption; and that Jesus Christ is coming back—actually, literally, visibly, gloriously, redemptively—to take His loved ones home. I tell you, that's the basis, in my estimation, of building a great church. And so I want you to listen. Some people don't like the idea of preaching about the blood, because to them it's so gory. Well, friend, I want to tell you, it's not a gory story; it is a glory story. For the Bible says, *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Galatians 6:14)

And so, if we're Christians tonight, we want to hear about the blood of Jesus so we can just say, "Well, glory! Well, praise the Lord!" And if you're not a Christian tonight, if you're not saved, oh, how you ought to listen! For God put Calvary, dear friend, with its blood-stained cross, and its blood-drenched slopes, across the path of every hell-bound, hell-deserving sinner. And just as Rahab was delivered so long ago, thank God, tonight you can be delivered.

I. The Prophecy of the Blood

Three simple things we'll look at tonight. First of all, the prophecy of the blood—the prophecy of the blood. And I want us to go back to eternity past, and very quickly we'll go right on through the Old Testament. And I want you to see how many ways in illustration, in type, in statement, in prophecy, in allusion, in commandment, that God has spoken to us of the blood. You see, from Genesis to Revelation there is a scarlet thread through the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation there is a highway stained with blood, and every page of the blessed book is marked with the royal scarlet thread of Jesus' blood.

You see, the blood redemption was planned before God ever made this world. Did you know that before this planet was ever swung into space God had determined in His heart that He would send His Son to die upon the cross? Calvary was not incidental, not accidental. It was fundamental. It was in the plan of God before He ever made the world. The Bible tells us in Revelation chapter 13, verse 8, that Christ was *"slain from the foundation of the world."* (Revelation 13:8) That means, in the heart and mind of God, before He ever laid the foundations of this world, before He ever scooped out the seas, and heaped up the mountains, and flung out the stars, before anything was in the material realm, God Almighty, in His bosom, had accepted Calvary as a principle.

A. Adam and Eve

And then, we come to the book of Genesis—the first man and the first woman. I want you to look in Genesis chapter 3, if you would, for a moment, and verse 21—Genesis chapter 3 and verse 21. And, incidentally, folks, if you want to understand the Bible, you'd better understand the third chapter of Genesis. Genesis chapter 3, verse 21:

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"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Genesis 3:21) And right away, we see the blood being shed. You can't skin an animal without shedding blood. Adam and Eve were there in the Garden of Eden, and they disobeyed the Lord. And immediately, when they disobeyed God, they were stricken with guilt. Before this, they had lived in innocence, and they had lived in bliss. How wonderful it was! They were in communion with one another. They were in communion with God. They were in communion with nature.

Every river in that garden was God's love in motion. Every flower was God's love in blossom. The stars above them were God's love in diamond. What a beautiful, wonderful life they lived! And then they sinned. And when they sinned here, and distrust and guilt came into their lives, and frustration came into their lives, oh, at first they tried to cover it by making suits and aprons of fig leaves. And so Mother Eve took her needle, and she began to sew. And I think she must have been very cunning; and, doubtless, when she finished her fig leaf dress, Adam looked at her and said, "Why, Eve, you look stunning." And she said, "Well, Adam, I must say you look very good in green." And so they were quite proud of themselves until the Lord God came walking through the garden in the midst of the day. And the Bible says, *"And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God."* (Genesis 3:8)

You see, what looked good to one another was not able to stand the gaze of the thrice-holy God. And I want to tell you, so many of us have dressed in the rags of our self-righteousness, and in the fig leaves of our doing, which represent the works of the flesh, but God demanded something else. And so God shed innocent blood, and God made for Adam and for Eve coats of skin to cover themselves with, which is the picture of the covering of righteousness that we received when the Lord Jesus Christ died for us. And here in the very beginning of human history God is beginning the scarlet thread through the Bible with the coats for Adam and for Eve.

B. **Cain and Abel**

And then we go right on down through the Bible, and we come to Abel's lamb and Cain's offering. Look in Genesis chapter 4 and verse 3: *"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."* (Genesis 4:3–5)

Now, what happened here? Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. And man instinctively wants to worship God. Now, Adam and Eve have been excluded from the Garden of Eden, and now it is time to sacrifice to God, because when there's a consciousness of sin, there's a need to sacrifice. And so Cain says, "Well, I know what I'll sacrifice. I'm a farmer, so I'll just sacrifice the fruit of the ground." I don't know what

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he brought, maybe some of the luscious fruit that he had seen in the Garden of Eden, and doubtless there was still some of it outside the Garden of Eden. I don't know what kind of fruit there was, but grapes and pomegranates and figs, and perhaps some vegetables—why, it looked like a county fair! I'm certain he'd done such a wonderful job. And he said, "Here, Lord, this is for you." But Abel, who had a spiritual nature, had already learned the lesson that God demands blood. For the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22, *"Without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22)

And so, Abel brought a lamb, and that lamb, I believe, ladies and gentlemen, was a prophecy of the Lamb of God. And the Bible says God accepted the sacrificial lamb. The blood of the lamb God accepted, but God did not accept Cain's offering—why? Cain offered vegetables, and you can't get blood out of a turnip—he offered vegetables. And the Bible says, *"Without shedding of blood is no remission."* We go right on through the Bible.

C. **Noah**

I want you to notice, please, in Genesis chapter 8, the way that men have been living is terrible, and the imagination of their thoughts was only evil continually, and so God destroyed that entire antediluvian civilization by a flood, and God sent judgment, and after Noah had come out of the ark, preserved through the flood by the ark, which is a picture also of the Lord Jesus Christ, we read in Genesis chapter 8 and verse 20 these words: *"And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar."* (Genesis 8:20) Here again is the shedding of blood. And after two thousand years of human history, the beginning of a new dispensation, coming out of the ark, there is still the same need: it is built upon blood redemption, for *"without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22)

D. **Abraham and Isaac**

Then, I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 22. God is getting ready now to teach Abraham, the father of the faithful, one of the greatest lessons of his life. God has promised Abraham that he would have a son, and through that son, Isaac, all of the nations of the world would be blessed; and Abraham and Sarah could not believe God. They were incredulous at first, and yet God gave this son to them. And this son was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he was the son of prophecy, the son of promise, the son of miraculous birth, and the son, dear friends, of sacrificial death, as we see it in a type and in the figure. For the Lord said to Abraham, who was then Abram, "Take Isaac, your son—your only son; take him up upon a place that I will show you," which is Mount Moriah—incidentally, the same mountain upon which our Lord was crucified. "Take him there, and offer him unto me for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:2) Abraham took him there to sacrifice him knowing, the Bible says, that God was able to raise him from the

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dead. (Hebrews 11:19)

Oh, what a faith Abraham had! What a lesson Abraham learned! The Bible says in the New Testament that the gospel was preached to Abraham. (Galatians 3:8) And in this incident, Abraham saw the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in type and in figure. And I don't have time to get into that, but look in Genesis chapter 22 and verse 13. Just before Abraham is ready to plunge that dagger into the quivering heart of his son Isaac, the angel says, "Abraham, Abraham, don't you do it! Don't do it! Stay your hand!" (Genesis 22:11–12) And then, verse 13: *"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."* (Genesis 22:13)

Here was Isaac, ready to receive the judgment, and here is a ram that is substituted. And the blood is spilled, and Isaac is set free, and an innocent animal dies as a substitute. And how clearly God preached the blood atonement, for *"without shedding of blood is no remission"*! (Hebrews 9:22)

E. **Passover**

We go on through the Bible—and look in Exodus chapter 12 and verse 13, if you will. Abraham's descendants have gone down into Egypt; they've become slaves to Pharaoh and the cruel taskmaster, and God wants to deliver His people and set them free from bondage and from the land of Egypt. There comes that particular night when they're ready to go out, the night of the Passover, and we read in Exodus chapter 12, verse 13, God said, *"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you."* (Exodus 12:13) God had told them to take a lamb—again, an innocent animal—to slay that lamb, and to take the blood of the lamb, and put it on the lintels, and on the doorpost of the house. And God said, "When I see that blood, then I will pass over you; there will be no judgment."

And I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, there could have been no substitute for the blood. Suppose some well-meaning Jew had said, "Well, I'll just put some jewels on my doorposts. Jewels are a lot more attractive than blood. I'll put some diamonds and rubies on the lintels and the doorposts." Or someone else says, "Well, I'll overlay my doorpost with gold." Someone else says, "I think a beautiful poem would be nice, if I tacked that up on the doorpost." No, dear friend, they surely would have perished.

You know, it's amazing how many people want to offer the rubies and diamonds of this world's accoutrements, how many people want to offer their sentiment, rather than God's sacrifice. But God said, "When I see the blood—when I see the blood—I will pass over you."

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F. **Temple Sacrifices**

We go right on through the Bible, and I want you to notice in Exodus chapter 29, if you will—Exodus chapter 29 and verse 16. They've come now to the place where our Lord is teaching sacrifices in the tabernacle, and I want you to read the Word of God: *"And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take his blood, and sprinkle it round about upon the altar."* (Exodus 29:16) And on and on and on we could go showing you time and time again, in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, where thousands upon thousands of sheep, and oxen, and turtle doves were killed, and blood was spilt, and blood was poured out, because God had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." (Exodus 12:13) All the way down through the Bible, until the time of the Lord Jesus Christ, animal sacrifices were being offered.

G. **The Crucifixion**

And then, finally, the Lord Jesus Christ died upon that cross. And when Jesus Christ died upon that cross, He was the fulfillment of all of this. Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, I would not attempt to describe the crucifixion to you. Time would not allow it; my vocabulary is not able to do it. But I want to use the words of another right now. This is what he said: "Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint the tragedy that was enacted on that hill," talking about Calvary. And then he said, "Gather the wail of the icy winds that howl through the north; extract the heart despair of a mother watching while beasts tear at the throat of her baby; capture all the helpless groans and the hopeless shrieks of the damned—and with all of this at your command, you will still be unable to paint the picture that is Calvary."

Jesus, the Lamb of God, died upon that cross, and Jesus, when He died upon that cross, did not die as a martyr. So many people think of Jesus Christ as a martyr. A martyr is a person who dies when he perhaps did not want to die, or did not plan to die. People speak of the blood of the Lamb as being spilled. It was not spilled. It was poured out at Calvary. Jesus Christ Himself said in John chapter 10, verse 18, *"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."* (John 10:18) The Lord Jesus Christ, when He was on that cross, told Peter that He could call twelve legions of angels if He wanted to, if it were necessary. How many angels are twelve legions of angels? Seventy-two thousand angels He could call if He wanted to.

I read in the Bible where one angel slew 185,000 Assyrians. What would He do with 72,000 angels? The Lord did not hang on that cross because He could not get out of it. He was crucified before the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8) He came to die. He planned to die. He lived to die. He was born to die. There's a scarlet thread that goes all the way through the Bible, and we call this the prophecy of the cross.

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II. The Power of the Cross

Now, the next thing I want you to notice with me tonight is the power of that cross—the power of that cross. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18, *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:18) And I want us to think of the power of the cross. What does the blood of the Lamb do? "There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb."

A. The Blood Redeems Us

In the first place, it's the blood that redeems us. Look in 1 Peter 1 for a moment—1 Peter 1 and verse 18. Turn to it, mark it—it's one of the most precious verses in all of the Bible, in my estimation: *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."* (1 Peter 1:18)

That verse tells us that it is the blood that redeems us. We were sold, ladies and gentlemen, as slaves. There was a price against us that we could not pay, and the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us. When He died on the cross, He uttered these words: *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) And that phrase in the Greek, *"it is finished,"* is one word. And that one word was a word that was marked upon bills that were paid in full: *tetelestai*. It was a word that was marked on a prison record when the sentence had been fulfilled: "it is finished; it is done." And when Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He bowed His head and He cried, "*Tetelestai—it is finished*." Thank God, it was.

B. The Blood Brings Us Nigh

And that blood, it redeems us. But not only does it redeem us, it brings us nigh. Look in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 13—Ephesians 2, verse 13: *"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."* (Ephesians 2:13) Do you know where a man is without the blood? He's a long way from God. Every now and then I talk to someone about coming to Christ, and he'll say something like this: "Well, I'm a member of the lodge." And he tells me about the lodge that he belongs to. And then I say, "But I'm talking to you about being saved by the blood of Jesus." "Well," he says, "in order to be a member of the lodge, you've got to be a good man." Now, when a man starts telling me how good he is, I know he's a long way from God. You mark it down. Now I'm not here to pick a fight with the lodge—that's not what I'm talking about. But I'm telling you, you can be a member of the mice, the moose, and the masons, and if you're not born again, you're going to split hell wide open. It's the blood that brings us: *"Without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22)

A woman had a precious little baby to die, and the pastor tried to comfort that

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woman. She wasn't a Christian. She didn't know the Lord. This dear man of God, this pastor, was trying to comfort her as they stood by that little white casket. And this woman who had never come the blood-sprinkled way, who had never received Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, said, "Pastor, tell me, why is it that God is so far away when I need Him?" And the pastor said lovingly and tenderly to her broken heart, "Dear one, it is not God who is far away from you; you're the one so far away from God."

Oh, our sins have separated us from God, and it's the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that makes us nigh. Oh, I heard Tom Clayton say years ago, "If you're not as close to God as you used to be, someone has moved, and it wasn't God." Oh, that's a good thought. Someone has moved, and it isn't the Lord. It's the blood, dear friend, that brings us close, that makes us nigh.

C. **The Blood Makes Peace with God**

But not only does the blood redeem us, not only does the blood bring us into fellowship with the Lord; but it makes peace with God. The Bible says in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 20, *"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself."* (Colossians 1:20)

Did you know that man by nature is at war with God and we can only come to God on God's peace terms? And God's peace terms are the blood atonement. And you will never, no never, no never, have peace with God—therefore, never peace with yourself; therefore, never peace with your fellowman—until you come the blood-sprinkled way. That's the only way to have peace. There's power in the blood.

A dying woman was speaking with a man, a cleric. And this man, well-meaning, didn't understand how well she knew the Lord; so he spoke to her and said, "Lady, you're getting ready to die. Have you made your peace with God?" She shook her head. And he said, "Don't you think it's time that you made peace with God?" And even though she was dying, she said with a twinkle in her eye, "No, I don't need to make peace with God, because I'm resting in the peace that Jesus has already made." That's good, isn't it? We don't make peace with God. The Bible says He hath *"made peace through the blood of his cross."* There's not anything we can do. We rest in the power of the blood that makes peace.

D. **The Blood Cleanses**

And not only does it make peace, but it cleanses—oh, it cleanses! The Bible says in 1 John 1:7, *"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7) So not only does it remove the punishment; oh, bless God, it removes the pollution!

I heard a preacher friend of mine, Earl Allen, tell a story. He said that his wife wanted a lovely dress, and it just was a white dress, or almost white, that she thought was so pretty. You know, every now and then a pastor likes to do something nice for his wife—

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just every now and then. And so he just kind of took all the money out of the cookie jar, and everything else, and bought her this lovely dress. And when they went out one of the first times, something spilled right on that dress; and so you know how she felt. And they took it to the dry cleaners and said, "Here's what the stain is: see if you can take it out." And so he said, "Well, I'll try." And he tried, and he did his very best, but when she came back, here's what he said: "I've gotten most of it out." He said, "As a matter of fact, I doubt that anyone would be able to see it. You can wear it, and I don't think anyone will notice it; but in reality, the stain is not completely removed." Mrs. Allen said, "I was never able to wear that dress and enjoy it, because I knew that stain was there, and it never did quite satisfy me."

Ladies, you can identify with her; you know something about what she was feeling. She said, "I just, even though he said perhaps no one else could see it, or could hardly see it…"

I want to tell you, dear friend, when Jesus Christ cleanses, He cleanses all the way. "What God has called cleansed, let no man call unclean." (Acts 10:15) And I don't care what sin you've committed—it can be the sin of murder, rape, incest: you name it—and I want to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. Don't you go around like a second-rate citizen. Brother, "What God has called cleansed, let no man call unclean." I say today, with all of the unction and function of my soul, hallelujah for the cross—hallelujah for the cross—and for the blood that makes the vilest sinner clean, because not only does it redeem, and not only does it make us nigh, and not only does it bring peace, hallelujah, but the blood cleanses.

E. **The Blood Gives Us Power over the Devil**

One other thing the blood does: It gives us power over the devil. The devil doesn't want you to learn about the blood. Dwight L. Moody, that great evangelist who took two continents and shook them toward God and toward heaven, that man who was used as mightily in his day, and perhaps more so, than Billy Graham is being used, said that when he was a young preacher someone came to him and said, "Mr. Moody, if you want to be used, and if you want to speak before cultured audiences, you'd better leave out that blood business." Moody said, "I determined then to preach on the blood more than ever before."

Oh, the devil doesn't want you to hear the message of the blood of Christ. The devil hates it. And the Bible says in Revelation chapter 12, verse 11, *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."* (Revelation 12:11) It's the blood that Satan fears; not your efforts, but the blood of the Lamb.

I like what Charles Haddon Spurgeon had to say about this. Charles Spurgeon said, "At one time I used to argue with the accuser; but he's not worth it." Spurgeon said, "We cannot convert or convince the devil, so just turn him over to Jesus. When he tells me

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I'm not a saint, I answer, 'Well, what am I then?' 'A sinner' says he. 'Well, so are you,'" says Spurgeon to the devil. "'Ah,' saith he, 'you will be lost.' 'No,' say I, 'that is why I shall not be lost, since Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and therefore I trust Him to save me.'" That's what Martin Luther calls "cutting the devil's head off with his own sword."

Oh, listen. The devil hopes that you don't understand the power of the blood of Jesus—there's power to overcome Satan. And the next time Satan bothers you, you put everything beneath the blood, and then in the power and the authority of the blood you stand against the devil, and the Bible says, *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7) Yes, there's power in the blood.

III. The Place and the Preciousness of the Blood

Quickly now, and finally, I want to mention not only the prophecy of the blood, and the power of the blood, but may I very quickly mention just a moment the place and preciousness of the blood. You know, there are some people who hate the blood—they really do. Look in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 28—Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 28: *"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* (Hebrews 10:28–29) I had rather fall dead on this platform than to do such a thing; but there are those who do: they wipe their feet on the blood of Jesus. They tread the Son of God, the bleeding form of the Son of God, underneath their dirty feet.

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, you may not realize it tonight, but everybody tonight is coming in contact with the blood of Jesus—I said everybody! Tonight, you're going to walk out of this building under the blood or over the blood. Did you hear what I said? Either you will be under the blood or you're going to place the blood under you. When the Lord told those Jews in the Passover, He said, "Put the blood upon the lintel and upon the doorposts," but there was no blood for the threshold; the blood is not to be under our feet. But I wonder, will you walk out of here tonight under the blood, or you will walk out over the blood?

If you walk out over the blood, I pity you. You're walking out placing the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, beneath your feet. You're doing *"despite unto the Spirit of grace."* And verse 30 says, *"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Hebrews 10:30–31) And I would hate to face God knowing that I had trampled beneath my feet the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, some hate the blood; others scorn the blood, and laugh at the

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blood. For the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 18, *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."* (1 Corinthians 1:18)

I can imagine a little Egyptian boy, the son of Pharaoh, coming to Pharaoh and saying, "Daddy, don't you think that we'd better get a lamb, and sacrifice a lamb, and put some blood on the doorpost of our house? For Moses said that unless there's blood on the doorposts the first-born son is going to die. And, Dad, I'm the first-born son in our family. And, Dad, don't you think we'd better do something just to be safe?" And I can imagine Pharaoh saying, "Son, I want you to know we've got the best religion money can buy in Egypt. I want you to know we've got plenty of priests and every priestcraft known to man, and Egypt is full of gods. And besides that, son, when you go to sleep, there will be guards outside your door. Daddy will see to it, son. You go to sleep, and sleep well. And, son, don't you worry about that blood of the lamb stuff." But that night when the death angel passed through the land of Egypt, there was a flash, a gasp, a shriek, and Pharaoh's son lay dead, for *"without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22)

Oh, to some it's foolish, "*for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."* But, oh, while some hate it, and while some laugh, to those of us who are saved, it is precious—the precious blood of the Lamb.

Conclusion

Friend, I don't know about you, but I want to say tonight,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure.
—AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY

Hallelujah for the blood!

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God's Way for a New Day

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 5, 1982 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 3

"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves:
for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."
JOSHUA 3:5

Outline

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I. Christ Must be Pursued
II. Christ Must Be Perceived
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  A. Sanctification Is a Dedication to the Savior
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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and find the book of Joshua and the third chapter—Joshua chapter 3. We're thinking today on how to cross rivers of difficulty and enter into lands of opportunity, and I have entitled the message "God's Way for a New Day"—"God's Way for a New Day." Now, just go ahead and find it—Joshua chapter 3—because you will always get so much more out of a message if you'll have the Word of God there in your hand so it can get into your heart.

Joshua the third chapter—there is an exciting story that is there, and I want us to look at it together. And I'm going to read the entire third chapter: *"And Joshua rose up early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and they lodged there before they passed over. And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not*

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passed this way heretofore"—significant to us, on the eve of Bellevue's "Bold Breakthrough" and the report of our Long-Range Planning Committee: "You've not passed this way heretofore." *"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you…"*—isn't that a marvelous text, a prophecy of the wonderful works of God in the future for the people of God? And I want to say, for those people and for this people, that the future is as bright as the promises and the power of our great God—*"Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be thee. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the souls of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priest that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."* (Joshua 3:1–17)

I want to say, dear friend, that this is a wonderful, wonderful story—not just of what God has done, but it is a prophecy of what God is doing and what God will do. Now, let me give you the setting. The children of Israel have come out of Israel. They've been redeemed. They are getting ready now to go into their inheritance, into the Promised Land, the land that flows with milk and honey, and corn and wine, and grapes and

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pomegranates, a land of mountains and rivers and valleys and waterfalls, and sheep and cattle and oxen—a land of peace, a land of plenty, a land of prosperity, a land of promise. But between them and that land of opportunity was the river Jordan.

Now, God said to the people, "You just watch the ark—the ark of the covenant—and where the ark goes, you go. Just follow the ark." And so, the priest took that ark—and we're going to say more about that later—but it was a piece of furniture the size of the top of this pulpit, about four feet long and two feet wide and two feet high. They took that ark; they had staves that went through the side of the ark by which they could carry it. And they took that ark, carried it right down to the river Jordan. And as soon as the feet of those priests touched the river Jordan, the water stopped flowing and it just started stacking up like it was held up by a Plexiglas shield. And the ark stopped right there in the middle of the riverbed of Jordan, and God's people went right on through and came up on the other side.

Now you say, "Well, wonderful, but what does that have to do with me?" It has a tremendous amount to do with you, because as I've told you before, this is not just what God has been saying; it is what God *is* saying. And the Bible says, *"All these things happened unto them for examples [to us]."* (1 Corinthians 10:11) This is not just simply ancient history; it is an illustration of the way for the people of God. Remember our three questions when you look at any verse in the Bible: number one, you ask, "What did it mean then?"; number two, "What does it mean now?"; and, number three, "What does it mean to me personally?" or, "What did it mean for them back in that day?" It meant that God made a way for His people through the river of difficulty into the land of opportunity.

What does it mean to us today? Ladies and gentleman, that God is going to make a way for Bellevue and through our rivers of difficulty into our land of opportunity. It means that tomorrow the Lord will do wonders for us. And what does it mean to me personally? It means that God is going to help me through my rivers of difficulty and into my land of opportunity. And God is going to do wonders for me, and He's going to do them for you. Do you want a recipe for a miracle? Here it is—here's the way that God can do wonders for you, for me, for us. Pay attention; don't miss the lesson, and don't miss the blessing.

Now, the key to these wonders is that little word *ark*. Now, notice again in chapter 3—look at it—and Joshua said unto them, "Pass over before…the ark of the Lord your God"—"the ark of the Lord your God." (Joshua 3:6) Now, this word *ark* is used ten times in this one chapter, and therefore it is the key to everything that is happening.

Now, what was the ark? This was not Noah's Ark; this was not the ark, boys and girls, in which all the animals went. This was a little piece of furniture. I call it "God's treasure chest of blessing," because this ark represented the presence of God. Wherever the ark went, God went. The Shekinah glory of God dwelt around and within this ark—the ark of the covenant of the Lord God Almighty. It therefore pictures the Lord

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Jesus Christ, who is *"Emanuel…God with us."* (Matthew 1:23) Jesus is the One who has brought the presence of God to us in a very real and in a very personal way. So, Jesus is the believer's ark of covenant.

And it pictures the Lord Jesus. It was made with gold. The wood speaks of the humanity of Christ; the gold speaks of the deity of Christ. In this chest were three things: first of all, the tables of the Ten Commandments were placed in this chest; secondly, Aaron's rod—Aaron was the priest of the Lord—he had a staff or a rod that he used to guide the people with—Aaron's rod was in there, but this dry stick miraculously had started to bud and to blossom—they put that in the ark of the covenant; and also in the ark of the covenant was a pot with some manna in it. They picked up that manna that God had been feeding His people miraculously with, and they put it in the golden pot.

And all of these were in that treasure chest of blessing, and they all tell us something about the Lord Jesus Christ, because in Christ is the righteousness of God symbolized by the Ten Commandments. But not only is the righteousness of the Lord shown there, but the resurrection of the Lord is shown there. Out of that dry stick came life, and it speaks of Christ our resurrection. And then also, the golden pot of manna was there, and it was with that manna that God sustained and fed and empowered His people. Christ our supply—Christ our sustenance—is pictured there. Christ the righteousness of God; Christ the resurrection of God; Christ the resources: all of these are in that treasure chest of blessing.

And so, dear friend, to cross your river of difficulty, and enter into your land of opportunity, and put your feet upon the promises of God, and claim those promises, there is the ark of God. And that ark, I want to tell you again, represents the Lord Jesus Christ. So, having said that, there are three things I want to lay on your heart today, and I pray that God the Holy Spirit will give me the ability to lay them on your heart.

I. Christ Must be Pursued

First, Christ must be pursued—Christ must be pursued. Look, if you will, please, in chapter 3 and verse 3: *"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place,"*—now, notice this phrase—*"and go after it."* (Joshua 3:3) *"[Leave] your place, and go after it."* That is, "the ark—wherever the ark goes, you go." "When you see it move out, leave your place and follow after me."

Now, what does that mean to me? It means that Jesus Christ must be followed—Christ must be pursued. "Wherever He leads, I'll go": that's what I need to say.

I tell you, the Lord saved me as a teenage boy, and I'm so grateful that He did. I've never regretted it one single, solitary moment. I'm sorry I didn't give my heart to Jesus Christ sooner than I did. But soon after I got settled in my faith, I began to learn that

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God had a plan for everyone's life and that success was following the Lord, so I said, "Lord, I want to do what I you want me to do; and, Lord, I'm willing to do whatever it is that you want me to do." And I said as a young man, "Lord, I'm handing you a blank sheet of paper. I've signed my name at the bottom, and now you put on anything you want to put on. I'll just do whatever you want me to do." I don't know how the germ got into my mind that God might want me to preach, but somehow I got an inkling that perhaps God wanted me to preach. Now, that was a strange thing, friend, because if there was anything I was not like, it was a preacher, in those days. But I felt that in my heart God might want me to preach. And so I began to pray, "Lord, do you want me to preach?" After a while, God continued to confirm that, and it was, "Lord, I think you want me to preach." And after a while, it was, "Lord, if you don't want me to preach, you'd better let me know." Then, after a while, it was, "Lord, you want me to preach."

I believe that's the way God leads us. You know, the Bible says, *"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."* (Proverbs 4:18) At first, it's just sort of gray dawn. Then, the sun comes up a little more, and we see better. And before you know it, it is high noon.

Well, it became high noon; it was shining into a perfect day, and I had that conviction in my heart that the Lord wanted me to preach. I was still a teenage boy. I went to Ridgecrest, North Carolina, and there a man preached on giving your all to Jesus Christ—for whatever it was He was calling you to do, to do it. I don't remember the sermon the man preached that day, because the woman sitting in front of me had a nervous twitch, and she twitched all the way through that service. Now I'm not making fun of her, because, bless her heart, she couldn't help it. But I could not tell you one solitary word that preacher said. But I tell you, there was another preacher there that day, and it was God the Holy Spirit, and He spoke to my heart.

And then, that congregation stood up and sang this invitation hymn:

"Take up Thy cross and follow Me,"
I heard my Master say:
"I gave My life to ransom thee,
Surrender your all today."

And then, they sang that refrain:

Wherever He leads I'll go,
Wherever He leads I'll go;
I'll follow my Christ who loves me so,
Wherever He leads I'll go.
—B. B. McKinney

And God placed before my eyes a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's ark of the covenant, and God said, "Follow Him." And that's what I've tried to do.

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Last week, Joyce and I celebrated our wedding anniversary, which was on September 2, and we had a wonderful time together. And my mind went back—my heart went back—to where that precious girl who consented to be my wife went with me on September 2, and we stood before that minister and gave our hearts anew and afresh to the Lord, and our hearts to one another. We kneeled, and the soloist sang,

O Jesus, [we] have promised to serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near [us], [our] Master and [our] Friend;
[We] shall not fear the battle if Thou art by [our] side,
Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be [our] Guide.

—JOHN E. BODE

And He has guided us. He guided us to this church.

Frankly, folks, we didn't want to come—not because we were too good to come, or not because we were not good enough to come; we were just deliriously happy in the church where we were down there in Florida, and God was blessing in a wonderful way. Your pulpit committee intercepted us, and found us, and spoke to us about coming; and so we came here on that Sunday that we are going to commemorate next Sunday, ten years ago, and I preached in this place. And the power and the presence of God was great in this place, "and heaven came down our souls to greet, and glory crowned the Mercy Seat."

It wasn't because of my preaching. The glory of God preceded us here and hovered over this place. And, Brother Tommy, I know that you felt it as I felt it—that God was here with His people. I was not prepared for what was about to happen, because I thought I would just come and preach and get to know you, and you'd know me, and we'd go back, and you'd pray about it, and I'd pray about it. But right there on the spot, you unanimously, one hundred percent, voted to call me as your pastor. And the chairman of the committee said, "We voted to call you as our pastor." And I said, "Do you want me to give you an answer right now?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "All right, we'll come." And I was not prepared for those words that I believe God the Holy Spirit spoke through me, because I could not even have told you what I would have said, and I cannot tell you the mixed emotions that were in my heart.

After, it was a time of rejoicing here in the congregation. I left and went back to that study right behind here in that choir area, and I put my face in that rug and literally wept and said, "My God, what have I done?" There was a sense of fear and a sense of frustration: "How could I leave my people? How could I come here to a strange place with people that I do not know? Lord, how? How, Lord?" And the Lord said to me, "You just follow me—just follow me. Keep your eyes upon me. Follow me. Follow me. Follow me. Follow me."

And, friend, that's what Jesus Christ is saying not only to me, but He's saying to

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you—He's saying to us:

Wherever He leads I'll go;
I'll follow my Christ who loves me so,
Wherever—wherever, wherever—He leads, I'll go.

Will you do that? Will you say it in your heart?

That's what He's saying here in verse 3. Look at it—look at it: *"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place,"*—I don't care where your place is: it may be a place of comfort; it may be a place of satisfaction; it may be a place of happiness; it may be a place of ease—*"remove from your place, and go after it."* (Joshua 3:3) Do you want me to tell you a simple plan for success? So simple, so plain: just keep your eyes upon Jesus, and wherever He goes, follow Him. Do you want to be victorious? Find out what He is up to, and join Him. Keep after the ark! Go after it! Follow Him—follow Him! He is God's treasure chest of blessings.

II. Christ Must Be Perceived

I want to tell you something else, dear friend: Not only must Christ be pursued, but Christ must be perceived. Look again in verses 3 and 4. He says, *"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it."* Now, notice verse 4: *"Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure:"*—that is, about one-half mile—*"come not near unto it, that ye may know the way which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore."* (Joshua 3:3–4) Indeed, we as a church are plowing new ground, and we are traveling a road never seen before. Never before in our history have we had two-a-day Sunday Schools and never before have we had three morning worship services. We are just plowing new ground. We are going places that we have never been before.

Notice what God said. He said, "Look at the ark. Get the ark out front. Stay back about a mile." Why? It is very, very important that you don't crowd around it, because if you do, some people won't be able to see it. Now, what He's saying is that you must keep your eyes upon that ark. You're going through uncharted territory—ways you've never been—and therefore you must be able to see the ark in order to follow the ark. Not only must Christ be pursued, but Christ must be perceived—Christ must be perceived. That's the second thing I'm trying to tell you: He must be perceived. You must be able to visualize Him. You must be able to conceptualize Him. You must be able to see who He is, what He's doing, where's He going, and what He is doing.

Let me give you a good New Testament verse to put in your margin by verse 4. It is Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2, tells us that as

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Christians we are to be *"looking unto Jesus [who is] the author and the finisher of our faith"*—"*looking unto Jesus,"* not looking at Jesus. (Hebrews 12:2) You could do that this morning. I'm holding Him up before you, and I'm preaching Jesus. And you could be looking *at* Jesus. The devil looks at Him. But this verse says, "Looking *unto* Jesus…" Looking *at* Him just gives you knowledge *about* Him; looking *unto* Him gives you knowledge *of* Him. And we're to be *"looking unto Jesus."* Now, what does that mean, "to look unto Jesus," in Hebrews 12, verse 2?

Well, suppose you're in financial difficulty, and you tell your rich friend, "Look, I've got financial problems," and your rich friend says, "Don't worry about it. Look to me. I'll take care of it." Now He means not "look at me"; he means, "Look unto me. I'll handle it. Look unto me. I will meet your needs." So that's what the Bible means when it says we're to be "looking unto Jesus."

And this Greek word "looking unto Jesus" literally means we're to be looking away from everything else and looking unto Jesus. It's a technical word. It means not only to look at something, but it means to look away from everything else in order that you might look at something. Martin Luther, when he came to Hebrews 12:2, translated it this way: "off-looking unto Jesus." Now it doesn't mean you're off somewhere looking unto Jesus, but it means you're looking off from everything else unto Jesus. You see, this is the way to keep your eyes upon the Lord.

Now, you see, had they looked at the river Jordan rather than the ark, they might not have gone in. Had they looked at the fierce giants on the other side rather than the ark, they might not have gone in. Had they looked at that place of comfort and comparative safety on the sandy waste on the wrong side of Jordan, they might not have gone in. Oh, how important it is that you draw your eyes from everything else! Don't look at the devil. Look to Jesus. Satan will either terrify you or entice you; he'll come as a roaring lion or an angel of light. Either way, fix your eyes upon the Lord Jesus. Don't look at your circumstances.

I tell you what, dear friend: When the Long-Range Planning Committee comes with God's challenge for our church, if you look at it that way, we can't do it. You'll say, "It can't be done." And you'll be exactly right. It cannot be done if we get our eyes upon the circumstances rather than upon the ark. You see, the Bible says, *"To morrow the LORD will do"*—what?—*"wonders among you."* (Joshua 3:5) We're not interested in what we can do; we're interested in what we cannot do and what He can do, amen? *"The LORD will do wonders among you."*

And so, dear friend, we can't look at the rivers of difficulty; we must look at the Lord Jesus. Don't put your eyes upon circumstances. Peter got out of the boat and he was walking on the water. And he was doing fine until a ferocious wave slapped him in the puss. And then he said, "Nobody can walk on water"—and he was right. And he started

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to sink because he took his eyes from Jesus. Up until that time, he'd been looking unto Jesus.

A. Do Not Fix Your Eyes upon Your Brethren

Don't look at your brethren. Now, friend, if you want to know what's wrong with the church, don't look around; just go look in the mirror. Folks, a church is just made up of people like we are. Don't take your eyes from Jesus and put your eyes on your fellow church members. The middle verse in the Bible says, "It's better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man, whose breath is in his nostrils." (Isaiah 2:22) That's a wonderful verse. I mean, dear friend, don't even get your eyes upon your pastor; don't follow me. Follow Jesus—follow Jesus! Of course, there's a sense in which you need to follow your pastor as he follows the Lord. But, dear friend, if I called you to keep your eyes upon me rather than upon the Lord Jesus, I'm not being the pastor that God wants me to be and you're not being the Christian that you ought to be. How we need to keep our eyes not upon our brethren! Any Christian is headed for a fall that takes his eyes from Jesus and puts them on the faults of fickle saints for whom Jesus died.

B. Do Not Fix Your Eyes upon Creeds

Dear friend, I want to tell you, don't put your eyes upon your creeds. You say, "Well, I believe right. I know the Bible. I'm a member of a fundamental, orthodox church." Well, you can be a member of a fundamental, orthodox church and go straight to hell if you're not looking to Jesus. *You're not saved by creed; you're saved by Christ. You're not saved by the plan of salvation; you're saved by the man of salvation.* You need to be looking unto the Lord Jesus Christ. Look away from everything else, and put your eyes upon Christ—Christ only, Christ alone. Oh, dear friend, as we learn to look at Jesus, every inch of the way, He's going to make a way through the wilderness for us.

How do you look at Him? How do you perceive Christ? Through the Word. He said, *"Search the scriptures; for they are they which testify of me."* (John 5:39) In that day they could see the Ark of the Covenant; in that day they could put their physical eyes upon that physical object, but that was only a prophecy and a picture of a greater spiritual truth. *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."* (2 Corinthians 5:7) And we perceive the Lord Jesus with the eye of faith as we're in the Word. Are you having a quiet time with God? Are you meditating on the Word of God? Are you seeing Jesus? Friend, again, the way to victory is to see Jesus and go on seeing Him. Did that get in? There's no way to be victorious unless daily, moment by moment, mile by mile, inch by inch, you keep your eyes upon Jesus Christ.

III. Christ Must Be Preferred

Now, what is the way through the river of difficulty into the land of opportunity? Number

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one: Christ must be pursued. When you see the ark, go after it. Number two: Christ must be perceived. Keep your eyes on it, for you have never passed this way before. (Joshua 3:4) Thirdly, not only must Christ be pursued, and not only must Christ be perceived, but Christ must be therefore preferred—Christ must be preferred. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you."* (Joshua 3:5)

Now, what does that word *sanctify* mean? Well, it means "to separate yourself, set yourself aside apart, for a person or an activity." Now, who was the person? The Lord. The activity is what? Following the ark, so that you can possess your possessions. Now, you see, above everything else, this ark was to be preferred. They were to separate themselves to this task of following the presence of God wherever it went.

Now, a good illustration is worth a thousand words; so Joshua, who told the people to sanctify themselves, gives us an illustration of what it is. And so, turn to Joshua chapter 24. Just put a bookmark there in verse 3, and turn to 24. And let's look, beginning in verse 14, and you'll see really what this sanctification really is. Joshua chapter 24 and verse 14—here is Joshua's challenge to the people of that day. It is God's challenge to the people of Bellevue today. Listen to it. He brought them to the threshold of opportunity. He brought them to the place of difficulty. And Joshua makes it clear, and he makes it plain—no equivocation, no fine print in the contract. He says in verse 14, *"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14–15)

Now, let me tell you out of those verses what sanctification is. Are you ready for it?

A. Sanctification Is a Dedication to the Savior

First of all, sanctification is a dedication to the Savior—a dedication to the Savior. Look in verse 14 and see what he says here. He says in verse 14, *"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth."* (Joshua 24:14) Have you done that? Have you come with a reverence to the Lord? Have you said, "Lord, sincerely, truthfully, reverently, you are Lord"? Look up here at me, church members. I'm not asking, are you a member of Bellevue? Are you a Baptist? I'm not asking, are you a good man? Are you a good woman? I'm asking you, is Jesus Christ Lord? Is He? I say, is He? Answer that question. Jesus said, *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46)

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B. Sanctification Is a Separation from Sin

What is sanctification? Friend, it is a dedication to the Savior. And not only is it a dedication to the Savior; it is a separation from sin. Look at the next part of verse 14: *"And put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt."* (Joshua 24:14) Put them away. Those gods represented the sinful way, the Egyptian life, the old life. They were new people—new creatures. It's not enough, dear friend, just for you to be convicted of your sins. He's not waiting for you to weep tears this morning. We're not only to be broken over our sins; we're to be broken for our sins. We're to put them away.

Have you put away your sin up here? Let me ask you, is there in your heart, in your life right now, any sin—unconfessed, unrepented-of sin? "Well," you say, "everybody has a little sin." Friend, the Bible says put it away. The Bible says be clean. The Bible says be holy. God is calling to Himself a holy people, and the church holy is the church victorious. And I'm calling upon you as staff, as the pastor, as deacons, as Sunday School teachers, as committee workers, as training workers, as workers in our music ministry, and workers in our women's ministry to be clean and to be pure. Are you clean? What fools we are if we allow un-confessed sin in our hearts! Is there a grudge in your life right now? Some filthy habit in your life? Some act of dishonesty, some lust, some failure, some sin? Be done with it! Confess it! Get rid of it! That's what it means to sanctify yourself. A sanctified people means that they are a separated people.

Have you ever gone on an airplane and gone through one of those little archways that you have to walk through to see if you're carrying any contraband—I mean, if you have a knife, or a gun, or whatever? I hope you don't carry guns on airplanes. But, you know, you go through that thing. And even if you have too many keys in your pocket, too much money, that little buzzer goes off. You know what I'm talking about. And you have to step back and empty your pockets, then go back through. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had something like that that would detect sin and we just make every one of these doors, put one over it, every one of them? And then, before you could leave, you know, you walk out, and you have to leave here, and that thing… And you say, "But, oh, come on back in here; we're going to preach some more and just bring you right on back in." You know, you look so holy, but God knows what's in your heart. God knows some of you would stay in here for six months before you could ever get out one of those doors if there was such a device that could detect sin.

Friend, sanctification is saying, "I can walk through that door, and God in heaven knows there's no unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my life. There's nothing hidden away." Could you walk out through one of those doors today if there were such a device? If you could not, dear friend, without the alarm being set, you are to be a sanctified person.

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C. Sanctification Is a Presentation for Service

There must be a dedication to the Savior. And there must be a separation from sin. And then, there will be a presentation for service. Notice what he goes on to say in the last part of verse 14. He says, *"And serve ye the LORD."* And then, he says in verse 15, *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14–15) Over and over and over again, he mentions the word *serve*—*serve*, *serve*, *serve*! God didn't call you to be saved, sit, sour and soak; but God called you and God saved you to serve Him. It's not just enough that you turn from sin—that's not separation. Real biblical separation is turning from idols to serve the living God. A lot of people just have a negative religion. You know, they think that they're sanctified because of what they don't do: they don't smoke, and they don't chew, and they don't go with the girls who do. And so they think that they are sanctified because of what they don't do.

Well friend, a telephone pole doesn't smoke or chew. It does more than folks I know. At least it carries a message.

Some people, dear friend, are dead to sin, but they're not alive to God. What is sanctification? When we prefer Christ. We're saying, "I'm going to sanctify myself. I am going to be dedicated to the Savior. I'm going to be separated from sin. And I'm going to be captivated by service. I'm going to say, 'Here I am, Lord Jesus. I give myself to you. I will serve you."

And I tell you what I'm asking of you today. You listen to me. I'm asking it because God the Holy Spirit is asking it. I'm asking you to say, "Pastor, we're going to serve our God." Friend, that's all that really counts: just serving Him! I'm going to ask you, no matter what it costs, to leave your place, and follow that ark, and serve the Lord your God. Serve Him, friend—serve Him! Serve Him with all your heart. It pays to serve Him. And God's people said, "Amen! We will serve the Lord our God." *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15)

All right, that's what it means, dear friend, to cross rivers of difficulty; that's what it means to enter into land of opportunity: It means to pursue Christ. And in order to pursue Him, it means to perceive Him: we must be looking to Him. And it means that we must, therefore, prefer Him: that we separate ourselves from everything else, that we are dedicated to Him, we are separated from sin, that we serve Him with our heart, we serve Him with our mind, we serve Him with our soul, we serve Him with our body, we serve Him with our money, serve Him, follow Him. If God be God, serve Him—serve Him!

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Conclusion

Let me just close this message by telling you if you're not a Christian, there's a wonderful picture of salvation here to tell us how to be saved. Do you remember what happened—do you remember what happened? They took that ark, and that ark pictures Jesus, the treasure chest of blessing. And that ark went down into the river Jordan, and then that ark went into the river Jordan. Do you know what happened? The water stopped flowing, and the waters just stacked up. Do you know what the river Jordan stands for? Do you know what it pictures? *Jordan* means "judgment"—"judgment." It was the river of judgment. And do you know where it flowed and where it ended up? In the Dead Sea, because that's where all judgment ends. After the judgment is death—spiritual death, eternal death; the lake of fire, not the lake of salt. But here, dear friend, is the river of judgment flowing into the sea of death. But what happened is this: that when that ark was carried into the river of Jordan, the judgment stopped. And the Bible tells us in verse 16 that it stopped all the way back to the city of Adam. Now, the King James says *"from the city Adam,"* (Joshua 3:16) but actually, some translations give it—and I prefer—"at the city of Adam." All the way back to Adam the Lord Jesus Christ has stopped the river of God's judgment. Jesus went into the waters of death and judgment for us, and Jesus baptized His soul in hell for us. Jesus took our judgment. That's the significance of the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when I'm baptized, what does it mean when I'm baptized, when you're baptized? That baptistry up there is a liquid tomb. And when you become a Christian, the old person you used to be dies; you become a new person. So, since the old person you used to be died, we're going to have a funeral. So, that's your funeral service, and they take you up there, and they place you beneath the water. And the Bible says, *"We are buried with him by baptism into death."* (Romans 6:4) And so, if it's a funeral, who do you think the mourners are? Well, there's only one: he's the devil. The old devil says, "Oh, I hated to see him die. We had so many good times together. He was such a dear friend. And now he's up and died on me, and there he is—buried."

But not only are we *"buried with him by baptism into death"*; but, *"as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."* (Romans 6:4–5) So, when you come up out of the water, that pictures our resurrection, a brand new life.

Well, well and good: we understand that. But now, why was Jesus baptized? Was Jesus a lost sinner who needed to repent of His sin and die to the old way and become a new person? Absolutely not! Well then, why was Jesus baptized by John the Baptist? John the Baptist couldn't understand it. John said, "You're coming to have me baptize you? I need to be baptized of you." Jesus said, "Never mind, John. It is our way of

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fulfilling righteousness."

Now, what is the righteousness of God? It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what Jesus was saying when He was baptized is this: "I am showing you I am identifying myself with the sinful human race." "Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us." (2 Corinthians 5:21) And Jesus in His baptism was prophesying and picturing, "One day, I will die and be buried"—you see it?—"and one day, I will be raised from the dead." And it was a picture and a prophecy of the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So far, so good. Okay now, where was Jesus baptized? In the river Jordan. What part of the river Jordan? Right down near Jericho. If you go to the Holy Land, the guide will point off from the city of Jericho when you stand there at the ruins of Jericho, and it points down to that sliver of water that you see—the Jordan River. He says, "Do you see over there?" Now tourists can't go down there now because of the hostility between Jordan and Israel. But he'll say, "You see that place over there? That's where Jesus was baptized."

Now, go back to Joshua chapter 3, verse 16, and look, if you will, again: *"The waters…came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside the city Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho."* (Joshua 3:16) In the same place where Jesus was to be baptized was where this ark went in; at the same place where Jesus was to be baptized is where this ark went into that river of judgment. And as that ark stopped the river of judgment, it prophesied Jesus going into the chilly waters of death and Jesus taking the judgment, and therefore stopping the judgment of God all the way back to the city of Adam that the people of God might pass through.

People, I want to tell you something: God has made a way through judgment for you through Jesus. Jesus, who went into that Jordan of death, Jesus, who went into that Jordan of judgment, has stopped that judgment that you might go through—that you might go through! He is our ark of deliverance. Friend, do you want to be saved? You know that little chorus "I have decided to follow Jesus"? Follow Him right on through Jordan. You can go through on dry ground because He died.

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Walking on Conquered Ground

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 27, 1992 Time: 1800

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 3

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

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Introduction

Now, take God's Word and turn to Joshua chapter 3 in the Old Testament. Tonight, we're going to be talking about "Walking on Conquered Ground." We're facing a new year. And, for some it will be a year of victory; for some it will be a year of defeat. But, I want to say to every mother's child here tonight that it need not be a year of defeat. The Bible teaches that we're to always triumph in Christ Jesus. And, while the Bible admits the possibility of defeat, it never teaches the necessity of it. Every child of God can walk every day, every step in victory. Now, you may not believe that, or you may think that is mere pulpit rhetoric, but it is a Bible fact. And, if you would like to walk a coming year on conquered ground, and say that "every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before,"

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and, indeed, have victory in Jesus, I want you to put your nose in the Bible tonight in Joshua chapter 3 and keep it there.

Now, we begin to read in verse 1, and I'm going to read the first five verses: *"And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore"*—and, of course, that's what makes it a New Year's text, this phrase right here—*"[you] have not passed this way heretofore. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you"* (Joshua 3:1–5).

Now, the children of Israel were facing a new land; we're facing a new year. Theirs was a land of opportunity, but they were separated by a river of difficulty. That land that the Israelites were facing so long ago—that land of Canaan—was a land of the great unknown. They did not know what they were going to face; and yet, they marched in victoriously.

Now, the key to all of it is in verse 4. Now, the Bible says here in verse 4: *"there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits"* (Joshua 3:4). Now, what does the "it" refer to? Well, the "it" refers to the ark of the covenant. And, if you read this chapter very carefully, you're going to find out that the ark is mentioned ten times. And, it is definitely the key to this chapter, and it is the key to your victory.

Now the ark symbolized the presence of God. It was a little piece of furniture about the size of this pulpit—about two feet by two feet by four feet. And, it's what I call "the treasure chest of blessing." It really pictured the Lord Jesus Christ because it was the ark of the covenant that symbolized the presence of God with His people. It was an Old Testament picture—an Old Testament illustration, an Old Testament prophecy, an Old Testament type—of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as the ark was the key to victory in that day, Christ is the key to victory in this day. The Bible says, *"All [those] things happened [to] them for examples [to us]"* (1 Corinthians 10:11). Now, I'm not trying to read into the Scripture something that is not there, but I do hope that I can properly interrupt the Scripture tonight. And, as you see the victory that God gave to Joshua and the people so long ago, that's the victory that God wants to give to this church today.

Now, the Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years; and now, something has happened. There is a new day. Now, they had had the ark in their midst for 40 years, and the ark, symbolizing the presence of God, had been with them. But

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now, something has changed. It's a new day. No longer is the ark with them; the ark is now leading them. The ark had gone with the people of God; and now, the people of God are going to go with the ark. And, God tells the people here in the scripture that I just read to you, "You're going into the future. You're going into the land of promise, and you are to move when the ark moves. When the ark doesn't move, don't you move. But, when the ark moves, you move."

Now, get the analogy. They'd had the ark with them for 40 years; but now, something was different. Not only did they possess the ark, but the ark now is leading them. Put it down: it is not possession—it is position—that counts. You may have Christ in you and not have victory. As a matter of fact, I suppose that most of the members of this church have Christ in them, but they do not have victory. You see, the difference in victory and defeat is not in what we possess. If that is true, then God would be a respecter of persons; God would have favorites. If God gave me something that He didn't give you when I got saved, then God, somehow, has been acting with favoritism toward me or anyone else. No, when we all get saved, we all get the same gift. God doesn't play favorites. Some people have victory, and other people don't have victory. But, the difference is not in what they possess so much as it is what possesses them and the position of the ark.

You see, the ark had been with the people for 40 years, but now the ark begins to lead them and they begin to follow. And, that is a picture of Christ enthroned as Lord and leader. You want me to tell you what success is? Very simple: *success is just simply seeing which way God is going and joining Him.* That's all success is—just seeing which way God is going and then join Him. Now, this is going to mean three things. I want us to look at it right here in Joshua chapter 3.

I. The Presence of God Will Guide You

First of all, when you put your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ and follow Him, as these people put their eyes on the ark and followed the ark, number one, the presence of God will guide you. Look in verses 3 and 4: *"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it"*—now, listen—*"that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore"* (Joshua 3:3–4). How are they going to know which way to go? How are they going to have leadership? Well, God said very simply, "When the ark moves, you move. When the ark starts out, just simply go after it." You see, you don't have to know the way. You don't have to know the future. All you must do is keep your eye upon the ark. New Testament correspondence: Keep your eye upon the Lord Jesus

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Christ. *The will of God for me, for you, is not a roadmap; it is a relationship.* Now, what are we going to face? Where are we going to go in 1993? Well, there are some things we don't have to know.

A. We Don't Have to Know Where

Number one: We don't have to know where. Notice in the last part of verse 4: *"that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore"* (Joshua 3:4). You don't have to know where. God says, "The ark will lead you"—where?—"It's none of your business. Your business is to keep your eye on the ark."

When God called Abraham to come out of the Ur of the Chaldees and to go into Canaan, God did not tell Abraham where he was going. He said, "You just go to a place that I will show you." And, Abraham left. And, when he left, he did not have his eye on a destination; he had his eye on God. And, that's exactly what God wants for you in 1993. God is not going to show you what He has in store for you for 1993. Who knows what this year may bring? It may bring death in your family. It may bring sorrow. It may bring fabulous wealth. It may bring a change of job. It may bring something that will drastically alter your life. The Second Coming of Jesus may take place in 1993. Wouldn't that be wonderful? We don't know what's going to happen. We just don't know. Therefore, *"[we] have not passed this way heretofore"* (Joshua 3:4). All we must do—but we must do this—is keep our eye on the ark.

Do you know why, I think, that God doesn't let us know the future? God will keep us in the dark to keep us close to Him—He keeps us in the dark to keep us close to Him. If we knew the future, then we might tend to wander or we might tend to be afraid or whatever. God says, "I'm not going to tell you the future. You don't need to know the future. Just keep your eyes on the ark. The presence of God will guide you. You don't have to know where."

B. We Don't Have to Know When

You don't have to know when. Look in verses 2 and 3: *"And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the hosts; And they commanded the people, saying, When [you] see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then…shall [ye] remove from your place, and go after it"* (Joshua 3:2–3). That is, you don't know where it's going. Just keep your eyes on it. You don't know when it's going to go. Just be ready to move when it moves. Isn't it wonderful to know in 1993, we don't have to know where and we don't have to know when? You just move with the ark.

I am learning some things about living the Christian life. I believe I'm going to be 105 before I learn all I need to know. And, probably then there would be mountains of knowledge—spiritual knowledge—that I would not have. But, one of the things that I'm

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learning—and it is this: with God, timing is far more important than time. And, God's timing is always perfect. You see, you're to learn to move when the ark moves. That is, when Jesus leads, then you're to move. Now, if the devil can't get you to do a wrong thing, if he can't get you to do a right thing in the wrong way, he'll try to get you to do a right thing at the wrong time. And, the Bible is full of people who just simply ran ahead of God. And, it's just as dangerous to run ahead of God as it is to run behind God.

Moses, for example—God told Moses, "Moses, I want you to lead the children of Israel out of the land of bondage, and I want you to lead them into the Promised Land." And, Moses got ahead of God. You remember what Moses did? He killed an Egyptian—he murdered an Egyptian—because he saw an Egyptian striving with one of the Israelites. And, Moses, moving ahead of God in the flesh, he killed this Egyptian and buried him. But, the winds of God's providence uncovered that dead Egyptian, and Moses fled to the wilderness. And, he wasted 40 years in the wilderness because he got ahead of God. When God was ready to deal with the Egyptians, He took them all out in one night. You remember that? He drowned them all in the Red Sea. Moses got ahead of God, killed one Egyptian, and wasted 40 years.

I think of Abraham. God said, "Abraham, Abraham, I'm going to give you a son of promise, and this son is going to be born to you in your old age." But, Abraham could not wait. He missed God's timing. He decided he'd help God out; he decided he'd hurry God up. One thing you can't do is help God, and another thing you can't do is hurry God. And, Abraham went in to Hagar, his wife's maid, and produced an Ishmael, and the whole world is suffering the repercussion of all of that today. You just simply cannot hurry God. When you see the ark move, you move.

We've been in the Christmas season, and we have been thinking about that text in Galatians that Jesus came in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). Now, there were several millenniums that passed, but God never got in a hurry to send His Son. God sent His Son in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). And, when the Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth, He spent 30 years in obscurity—30 years in a little town of Nazareth. Now, many of us would have said, "Jesus, why don't You hurry up? You're wasting time. Why, You're the Messiah, and You're spending 30 years in obscurity in a carpenter's shop in a dusty village." But, Jesus said, *"[My] hour is not yet come"* (John 2:4). Jesus always moves on time, never ahead of time, never late.

When Lazarus was sick, Mary and Martha said, "Come, come, and heal my brother." But, Jesus delayed. Why did Jesus delay? Because He wanted Lazarus to die. There was a greater display of the glory of God to raise the dead than there would have been to heal the sick. God's always on time. And, sometimes we get frustrated because we want to move and God doesn't want to move.

I think I told you about an experience I had. Maybe I've told you several times. But, I

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was out here at the Memphis Airport—supposed to go to Nashville for an important meeting. And, I went up, presented my ticket, and the lady said, "Well, the plane's going to be delayed for 20 or 30 minutes." I said, "Well, all right." I sat down, got a newspaper, and began to read. Went back 20 or 30 minutes—she said, "There's going to be about an hour delay." I said, "Well, all right." And, I went and sat down again and began to read. Went back again—she said, "I'm sorry, sir, but the plane has been canceled. The next plane is several hours from now." Well, something rose up in me, and I wanted to tell that lady a few things. But then, God said, "Adrian, that's not her fault. She just works there. It's completely out of her control, and the thing for you to do is to act toward her like a Christian ought to act." So, I just smiled, and I said, "Well, praise the Lord anyhow. That's okay. God bless you." And, I had my briefcase with me, and I went across the place, and opened everything out, and spread it out, and made a little office there, and began to work—worked for several hours. It wasn't all that bad—finally got on the airplane, got off in Nashville, caught a cab to go to downtown Nashville.

The big old red-haired boy driving that cab…and I started to witness to him. I asked him if he knew God. He didn't. I asked him if he wanted to be saved. He did. We stopped in front of the hotel there in Nashville and prayed. And, with tears, he asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart—was gloriously saved. And then, he looked at me, and he said, "Mister," he said, "you may not believe this, but God put you in this cab today"—"God put you in this cab today." He said, "Several weeks ago, I was in an accident." He said, "My blood brother was killed in that accident. He was with me." And, he said, "I came within an inch of dying." He said, "I may not look like it now, but," he said, "I was almost in Hell." And, he said, "God put you in this cab today to help me to know God." He didn't want to accept the fare. I forced him to accept the fare. But, he was just so happy that Jesus had saved him that day. And, I thought, with God—how foolish it would have been for me to be upset about that plane being late. And, God knew exactly what He was doing—and, with God, I've seen that so many times, and I think we've all seen it, that with God timing is far more important than time.

We tried to get out here to move these buildings and get out here to do everything. We tried to build downtown. We tried to buy some property downtown. We couldn't buy it. Now, I just bless God we couldn't. I just bless God that all of the things that we thought were so important…that God in His infinite wisdom says, "Now, if you'll just keep your eye on the ark…" You see, with God—listen, friend—with God, timing is far more important than time. You don't have to know where. Just keep your eye on the ark: wherever it goes, you go. You don't have to know when. Just keep your eye on the ark: whenever the ark moves, then you move.

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C. We Don't Have to Know Why

You don't have to know why. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves, for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you"* (Joshua 3:5). Do you know what a wonder is? A wonder is something that you can't explain. Now, my friend, learn this about the New Year, and learn this about the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and learn this about walking on conquered ground: you do not live by explanations; you live by promises. God doesn't explain to us His wonders. If God were to explain His wonders to us, we still wouldn't understand them, even if He explained them. God says, "My ways are not your ways; My thoughts are not your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8). But, just simply keep your eye on the ark. And, if you keep your eye on the ark, I can promise you, friend, the presence of God will guide you in this coming year.

II. The Promises of God Will Gladden You

Secondly, keep your eye on the ark, and the promises of God will gladden you. Now, look again in verse 3: and he says here, *"And [he] commanded the people, saying, When [you] see the ark of the covenant…"* (Joshua 3:3). Underscore the word "covenant." Do you know what a covenant is? A covenant is an agreement. It is a binding contract. It is an unfailing promise. And, God says, "It's the ark of the covenant. It is the ark of the promise. It is the ark of the agreement. It is the ark of the contract that I have with you." Now, you see, when we enter into a new year, not only do we have an ark to guide us, but we have a promise to gladden us—the presence of God to guide us, the promise of God to gladden us. Now, let's think about the promises that will lead you and me into this New Year.

A. The Promises Are for All the Saints

First of all, these promises are for all of the saints. Look in verse 7: *"And the LORD said [to] Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel"* (Joshua 3:7). You see, Joshua was taking over after Moses; and so, he needed leadership. And, God said, "Joshua, I am going to be with you, as I was with Moses, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." Now, what's the important thing about verse 7? It is this—that Moses had the promises of God, and Moses died. But, the promise did not die with Moses, and we need to learn this—that the promises of God did not die with the Bible saints.

Have you ever thought that the people of the Bible were different than we are? Have you ever thought that maybe God had His favorites in the Old Testament? Have you ever thought that Moses, and Isaiah, and Peter, and Paul, and James, and Elijah—that they were different than we are? They were not! The Bible says, for example, *"Elijah*

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was a man [of flesh and blood]…like passions as we are" (James 5:17). And yet, these people—these people—had the promises of God. And, the same promise that was with Moses was with Joshua.

And, I want to tell you something else: the same promises that were with Joshua and the other saints are with me. Before I came in tonight, I was reading in Psalm 119. I want you to find something here that blessed me. Psalm 119—look at it. And, I just said, "How fitting and how true that is!" Psalm 119, verses 89 and 90: *"For ever, O LORD"—"For ever, O LORD"—"thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations"* (Psalm 119:89–90). That means us, folks.

B. The Promises Are for All Seasons

The promises of God are for all saints, and they're for all seasons. You see, time does not erode away the promise. Now, God had given Moses a promise. God had made a covenant with Israel. They'd wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, but the promise had still had the dew of youth on it. It was just as fresh and just as real as it was when God gave it to Moses. And, I want to say this—that though the cannon of scripture has been closed for 2,000 years, the promises of God are just as fresh, and just as fragrant, and just as vibrant as if Jesus Christ had spoken them this morning. We need to understand that—that time does not erode these promises away. They're for all saints; they're for all seasons.

C. The Promises Are for All Situations

They're for all situations. You know what is wrong? Many of us get our eyes on someone like Moses. Now, be very frank, folks. Moses failed. God said to Moses, "I want you to lead the people in." But, Moses failed; he sinned. He did not stand on the promises; he did not claim the Word of God. And, Moses died on the wrong side of Jordan. And, what happens is this—that we get our eyes on what others do rather than on the promises of God. And, we see the failures of others, and we get our eyes on their failures rather than on God's promises. But, we have the presence of God to guide us into a new year. We have the promises of God to gladden us, and they are fresh and real. And, we need to claim them.

III. The Power of God Will Guard Us

And now, finally, not only do we have the presence of God to guide us and the promise of God to gladden us, but we have the power of God to guard us in this new year. Begin in verse 7: *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When [you] come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan. And Joshua*

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said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites"—and I feel like saying, "and the Termites." He's going to drive them all out—*"[And] the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan"* (Joshua 3:7–11). Now, he's saying, "Look, if you will. Follow the ark wherever it goes, and, if you will move when it moves, then the ark will go before you, and the ark will take care of every one of your enemies, and you will be walking on conquered ground. All of these Canaanites will fall before you, and God will give you His power."

Now, it's very important that, therefore, they know just exactly who this God is. I want you to notice how this God that's going to guard them is described.

A. **He's the Lord God**

First of all, He's the Lord God. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *"the LORD your God"* (Joshua 3:9). In verse 8: *"And thou shalt command the priests"* (Joshua 3:8). Why command the priests? Because God says so. When we move into a new year and we want God to bless us, we need to understand He is the Lord God. And, if He commands us to cross some Jordan, then it's our duty just to move forward. It's His duty to take care of Jordan and tell Jordan to get out of the way. He's the Lord God.

B. **He's the Living God**

Verse 10—He's the living God: *"And Joshua said, Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you"* (Joshua 3:10). The Lord God is the living God. Now, what does that mean? It means that the One who commands you is the One who inhabits you. He lives in you. He's not dead. He's not sick. And, every command of God that God gives you in 1993 is not a demand upon you; it is a demand upon the God that is in you. And, behind every command of God is the promise of God to carry out that command. It is really a demand upon the God that is in you. He is the Lord your God. He is the living God. And, God lives in you. So, God never requires of you, or them, or anybody else anything that they or we cannot do.

I was reading a while back that there rests upon every one of us 14.7 inches or pounds of pressure upon every square inch of our body—14.7 pounds of pressure. That is, we live in an ocean of air, and the air has weight. Actually, there are tons of weight bearing down on me right now—tons of weight bearing down on you. But, why are we not crushed like an egg under a sledgehammer? Well, the reason we're not crushed is we also have pressure within. And, the pressure within helps us to withstand the pressure from without. Now, that's the Lord is in us. *"Greater is he [that's] in you, than he [that's] in the world"* (1 John 4:4).

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Now, He is, number one, He's the Lord God. Number two: He's the living God.

C. He's the Liberating God

And, here's the blessed part: He is the liberating God. Notice verse 11: *"[And] the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, [that] as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand [up] upon an heap. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks [at] all the time of [the] harvest,) That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city of Adam"*—and a marginal reading is "at the city of Adam"—*"that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan"* (Joshua 3:11–17).

There are few passages in the Scripture that excite me more than what I just read to you. He is the liberating God. That tells me that you're not going to face any river of difficulty that He cannot conquer on your behalf. Now, it's a picture of the salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. All of this is full of rich symbolism and typology. Sometimes people accuse me of seeing too much, but I'm afraid sometimes we don't see enough. That ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The river Jordan—the word *Jordan* means "descent." And, part of the name *Jordan*—"dan"—means "judgment." It is a river that descends into the Dead Sea. And, well it might be called the Dead Sea because judgment always brings death. Now, the river Jordan starts up near Mount Hermon in the north part of the land of Israel, and it takes a torturous path and curves in a serpentine way; and it goes on down until finally it ends up in the Dead Sea. And, it has stood, in Bible typology, it as stood an illustration of death and judgment. And, at this time it was full to the brim. It was just overflowing its banks. That is, it was full of judgment flowing into the Dead Sea.

Now, the ark pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. And, that ark went into the chilly waters of death and the chilly waters of judgment. And, when the ark, picturing the Lord Jesus, entered into the river of death and the river of judgment, what happened? He stopped

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that river of death; it stopped that river of judgment. And, where did it stop it to? All the way back to the city of Adam. That's what it says here. I mean, *"in Adam all die"* (1 Corinthians 15:22). But, Jesus stepped into that stream of death and judgment, and when He did, He stopped it all the way back to the city of Adam, that the people of God might go through. That's just such a blessing to me as I think about it.

As a matter of fact, do you know where this happened? *"Over…against Jericho"* (Joshua 3:16). Well, if you go to Israel—some of you are going to Israel with us this spring—and if you go to the land of Israel, we'll go down to Jericho, and we'll look over yonder, and we'll see the place where the children of Israel crossed over. But, my dear friend, here's the exciting thing: that's exactly the place where Jesus was baptized. The baptism of Jesus takes on such a new significance when I think about this. Jesus went to the same place that that ark entered into. That is, that ark was just a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus's baptism was just a picture of the fact that Jesus would one day die for our sin and that He would stop the river of judgment all the way back to the city of Adam—hallelujah!—that the people of God might go through. And, that's what it's all about.

Conclusion

You want to walk on conquered ground, dear friend? Just understand Jesus. He is God to lead you, God to guide you, God to gladden you, and God to guard you. So, here are the three things that you must keep in mind this coming year.

A. Make It Your New Year's Resolution to Pursue Christ

Number one: You must pursue Christ. Make it your New Year's resolution: "I will pursue Christ"—I mean, "my great desire will be to know Him. I want to know Him. I want to follow Him. Wherever He leads, I'll go."

I was in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. I was a high school boy. A man was preaching on doing the will of God for your life, and I'd been praying about the will of God for my life. And, I had told God, "God, I'll do anything You want me to do." I had no idea that God would want me to preach. But, I said, "God, I'll do anything You want me to do." And, after a while, I began to get a germ in my mind and in my heart that God might want me to preach. And, after a while, it was, "Lord, I think You might want me to preach." And then, after a while, it was, "Lord, I think You want me to preach." And, "Lord, if You don't want me preach, You'd better tell me." And then, "Lord, You do want me to preach." And, it was just sort of a progress like that. And then, I remember that they were singing in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, at the Baptist Assembly, "Wherever He leads, I'll go / Wherever He leads, I'll go" (Ernest W. Blandy). And, I just said, "Lord, I will." And, I stepped out, and I committed my heart and my life to follow the Lord Jesus

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Christ wherever He leads. And, I have failed many times, and I'm a very, very imperfect individual. But, I can tell you and give you this testimony—that I have never, ever regretted it. The intention of my heart is to pursue the ark of the Lord Jesus.

When Joyce and I got married, we kneeled there at the altar. And, after the pastor had pronounced that we were husband and wife, the soloist sang these words. And, we wrote them out for her to sing, taken from a hymn. We changed the words just a little bit:

O Jesus, [we] have promised to serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near [us], [our] Master and [our] Friend;
[We] shall not fear the battle if Thou art by [our] side,
Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be [our] Guide
—JOHN E. BODE

I believe that one of the reasons that I'm here as the Pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church is of that commitment. And, very frankly, not that I did not respect this church and admire this church, but I did not want to come. I was as happy as a dead pig on ice down in Florida. And, I mean, if God had given me permission, that's exactly where I would have wanted to stay. But, I had made that commitment: "Lord, wherever You lead, I will go." Remember this—that success and victory in any realm is to see which way Christ is going and to follow Him. Make it your New Year's resolution, number one, to pursue Christ.

B. Make It Your New Year's Resolution to Perceive Christ

Make it your resolution, number two, to perceive Christ. That is, you cannot follow Him if you don't see Him. Now, they said, "You just stand back from the ark"—there in verse 3 (Joshua 3:3). There's about a half a mile distance between them and the ark, because he said, "I want everybody to be able to see the ark." You're to be looking unto Jesus—not at circumstances, not at Satan, not at your brothers, not at your fault, not at your successes. Just keep your eye on Christ.

C. Make It Your New Year's Resolution to Prefer Christ

Make it your New Year's resolution that you will pursue Christ, that you will perceive Christ, and, my dear friend, that you will prefer Christ—that He will be pre-eminent above all others, any other thing; that Jesus will be the Lord, your God, the living God, and the liberating God in your life. And, if you'll do that, even though you've not passed this way before, even though it's all new territory, I can promise you on the authority of the Word of God, you'll be walking on conquered ground every step of the way.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, I thank You for Your Word tonight. I thank You, Lord, for the encouragement that it's been to me. I thank You, Lord, so many times, that You have gone into the river of death and judgment and stood firm, that I might go through. I thank You, Lord, that You did that when You saved me—but Lord,

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not only when You saved me, but Lord, You do it over and over again when You liberate me and give me victory day by day. And, I pray, Lord, tonight, that there'll be many who will say, "I, by the grace of God this coming year will pursue Christ. I will perceive Christ. I will prefer Christ above anything else in my life. In Jesus's name. Amen."

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Your Guide to the Great Unknown

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 1, 1989 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 3

"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."
JOSHUA 3:5

Outline

Introduction
I. God is Going to Guide You Through the Uncharted Places
  A. We Don't Have to Know Where
  B. We Don't Have to Know When
  C. We Don't Have to Know Why
II. God is Going to Grant You the Unfading Promises
III. God is Going to Guard You with Unfailing Power
  A. He is the Sovereign Lord
  B. He is the Living Lord
  C. He is the Lord of All the Earth
Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take God's precious Word and turn with me, please, to Joshua. And, if you failed to bring a Bible with you, look there in the pew rack before you—most likely there is one there. And, find the Book of Joshua (relatively near the front of the Old Testament), chapter 3. Now, we're facing a brand new year, and we don't know what that year is going to bring. And so, the title of the message is "Your Guide to the Great Unknown."

Now, listen and see what this scripture has to say: *"And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it"*—now, in my Bible, those three words are underlined, "go after it." That's a key. And, I want you to underline it in yours, if you don't mind underlining. And then, verse 4—*"Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that*

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ye may know the way by which ye must go"—now, they didn't know which way to go; and so, here's what Joshua said: "Put the Ark out there. Put it far enough out that everyone can see it. When it moves, you go with it, because you don't know which way to go. And, he explains that further—*"for ye have not passed this way heretofore"*—now, we can certainly say that about this year. It's a brand new year, and we don't know what this year is going to bring. We've now passed this way heretofore—*"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you"* (Joshua 3:1–5).

My dear friends, I want him to do wonders for you this coming year. *"Tomorrow the LORD will do wonders [for] you"* (Joshua 3:5). Now, here were the children of Israel. They were right on the brink of blessing, right there on the wrong side of the River Jordan, getting ready to pass over. Before them was a land of opportunity. Between them and the land of opportunity was a raging river of difficulty. And, Joshua, now, is telling these people how to possess their possessions, how to have victory, how to enter into a land that they'd never been in before, and to enjoy that land, and to have victory. What an application that has for your life and my life as we face this new year!

Now, he said in verse 3: *"when [you] see the ark [move]…go after it"* (Joshua 3:3). And, he says in verse 4: "the reason for that is this: you have never gone this way heretofore" (Joshua 3:4). The key to this entire passage is the ark of the covenant that you read about in verses 3 and 4. What was the ark of the covenant? The ark of the covenant was what I call the "treasure chest of blessing." It was a about the size of that pulpit. It was five feet by two feet by four feet. It had a golden slab on top of it called the "mercy seat." Two angels, or cherubim, were on either side. And, in between those cherubim was the Shekinah glory of God. That ark was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ because that ark represented the presence of God with His people—and that's exactly who Jesus Christ is. And, that ark was an Old Testament picture—a prophecy, a type—of the Lord Jesus Christ. The ark is mentioned in this third chapter ten times. "And, God said to His people, 'When the Ark moves, keep your eye on the Ark; and when it moves, go after it, because you've never passed this before'" (Joshua 3:3–4).

Now folks, there was something radical and dramatic that happened in the life of those people. They had been wandering in the wilderness for forty years; and now, they're about to make a dramatic change. Now, what had changed? What caused the change? Well, think about it. Was it the ark? Not necessarily. You see, they'd had the ark with them for forty years. They had been carrying that ark around in circles for forty years, and they never entered in. It wasn't the ark that made the difference; it was the position of the ark. You see, they'd had the possession of the ark, but the ark had been in their midst. They had been just carrying the ark around. Now, the ark is no longer in their midst. The ark is out here in front of them. The ark is now their head, and the ark is

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leading. No longer are they taking the ark with them. They are now following after the ark.

May I tell you something, friend? Some Christians are victorious, and some Christians are not. Why are some Christians victorious and other Christians not victorious? Have you ever thought about it? All Christians possess the same thing—Jesus. The difference in Christians is not what they possess: it is not in possession; it is in position. You see, when the ark that they possess becomes the head and the leader, when the Lord becomes the leader, when the resident becomes the president, when the Christ who abides comes to preside, when the Lord begins to lead, then He leads to victory.

You see, all Christians have the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian is a possessor of God's ark of the covenant. But, not every Christian follows the Lord Jesus Christ into victory. Again, I want to tell you *that the difference in one Christian and another Christian—a victorious Christian and a failing Christian—is not in possession but in position.* Some have learned to follow after the ark.

Now if you will make that your New Year's resolution, if you will say, "I am not going to take a step without my eyes on the ark; wherever the ark goes, that's where I'm going," I can promise you'll have good success and you'll have victory. Do you want me to tell you what victory is? Let me put it in a sentence: *victory is seeing which way God is going and then to join Him.* That's it. Just see which way God is going, and then to join Him. Verse 3 says, "When you see the ark move, go after it. Just go after it" (Joshua 3:3). And, that made the difference between forty years of wandering in the wilderness and crossing over into the land of promise.

Now, I want to mention three things that will happen to you, dear friend, if you will do what God told these people to do so long ago. I want to tell you the difference this will make.

I. God is Going to Guide You Through the Uncharted Places

First of all, God is going to guide you through the uncharted places. Now, notice what he says in verses 4: "You've never been this way before. You don't know what the future is going to hold" (Joshua 3:4). You see, a new year is an adventure. Folks, we're walking through unexplored territory. We don't know what the next 15 seconds is going to hold. We've never been this way before; and so, we need someone to guide us.

I heard about some people, one night, who were out on boat in a dark stormy night. It was a creaky old ship, and the passengers were a little frightened. And so, they sent an envoy to go talk to the captain to find out what their situation was. He went and talked to the captain. He said, "Captain, the passengers are worried because this is an old ship and the night is dark and stormy. What is our condition?" The captain said, "I'm

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going to give it to you straight." He said, "This is a leaky old ship, and we may go down." "But," he said, "I want to tell you something else." He said, "The boilers on this ship are very weak. We may go up." "But," he said, "Whether we go down or we go up, we're going on." Friend, that's the way we are this year. I mean, it's a dark and stormy night, and this old world is not what it ought to be. We don't know what's going to happen. We may go down. We may die. We may go up. Jesus may come this year. But, whether we go down, or whether we go up—hey, folks, we've got no choice—we're going on, right? We are going on.

We don't know what a new year brings. We have never passed this way before. But now, you listen to me, dear friend: we don't have to know. Let me tell you three things we don't have to know.

A. We Don't Have to Know Where

We don't have to know where—we don't have to know where. You see, Abraham went out. He didn't know where he was going. He marched under sealed orders. Do you know why that was good for Abraham? Had Abraham known where he was going, he would have put his eyes on the destination. But, he didn't know where he was going. So, where did he have to keep his eyes? On God. Did you know that's why God may keep you in the dark—so that you'll keep your eyes on Him? You see, He said, "You don't have to know where you're going. Just when the ark moves, just go after the ark." Aren't you glad you don't know the future? I mean, what if you knew the demands that were going to be placed on you in the future? What if you knew the sorrows that might come? What if you knew the challenges? It might choke you down.

I remember, when I was in college, I was in at a university in Florida. And, a friend of mine came to me, and he said, "Adrian, guess what I did." I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I went through Memphis, Tennessee, and went to Bellevue Baptist Church, and went in and saw Doctor Robert G. Lee." Now, for those of you who don't know, he was the great esteemed pastor of this church, a legend in his own time, a great man. I thought to myself, "How on earth did you get in to see him?" Why, that would be like you telling me, "I went through Washington and stopped in to see Ronald Reagan." I thought, "How did you get in to see him?" And, I asked him—I said, "How did you get in to see him?" He said, "Well, I asked his secretary, and she let me go in and see him."

Well, I knew some churches had secretaries, but I didn't know any pastors had secretaries. And, I thought to myself, "How did she know who he would see?" I said, "What did you do in there?" He said, "Well, we talked a while, and then he had prayer with me." I thought to myself, "You know, that's so great. I'd love to be able to do that, and meet Doctor Robert G. Lee, and talk with him and pray with him. But, I said—you know, to myself: "I'll never have that opportunity." I was… I thought that was such a

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great thing that my friend was able to do.

Well, the years came and went. And, ultimately, I became the pastor of this very same church, sitting in that same office, sitting behind that same desk. My secretary buzzed and said, “Pastor, Doctor Lee is out here and wants to know if he can come in and see you.” I said, “Yeah, let him in.” Now, if you’d told me as a 19-year-old boy that I’d be the pastor of this church, it’d have blown my gaskets. It’s good we don’t know the future. What if you knew that a year-and-a-half from now your child is going to die of leukemia? What if you knew that you were going to go through heartache or tragedy the next six months? You couldn’t enjoy today by anticipating it. You see, God keeps the future from us. It’s not good to know the future. We are not supposed to know the future. We’ve not passed this way before. All we know is we’re to keep our eye on the ark.

B. We Don’t Have to Know When

You’re not to know where, and you’re not to know when. He just said, “When you see the ark move, go after it. Don’t move until you see the ark move; and whenever the ark moves, then you move. You don’t have to know when.” Let me tell you this about God: with God, timing is far more important than time. Now, God’s timing is always perfect. You know how you’re going to get in a mistake this coming year? You may choose to do a good thing at the wrong time. You see, it may be God’s will for you, but the ark has not yet moved. Wait, and you’ll see the Ark move. Then go after it.

You remember Moses? God told Moses to deliver the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, from the land of bondage. That was a good thing. But, Moses got ahead of God. He didn’t wait on God. He started out to be a missionary; he ended up a murderer. Remember how he killed the bully Egyptian—tried to bury him in the sand? But, the winds of God displayed the works of the flesh. Moses spent 40 years on the backside of the desert because he got ahead of God. When God got ready to move them out, he did it in 24 hours—just like that.

You see, God’s timing is what we need to work on. I think of Abraham. God said to Abraham, “Abraham, I’m going to give you a son, a son of promise. Through him all the nations of the world shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2). Well, that was a good thing, but Abraham got antsy; he couldn’t wait on God. And so, he decided he’d help God and hurry God. Friend, you can’t help God, and you can’t hurry God. But, what Abraham did—he went into Sarah’s handmaiden, Hagar, brought a son into this world named Ishmael, the progenitor of the Arabs. And, you know that, ’till this very day, that it is because Abraham got ahead of God. It’s not to say that God didn’t want the Arabs in the world. God loves these people as He loves the Jewish people. But, the point is that Abraham made a tragic mistake. He just simply got ahead of God.

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C. We Don't Have to Know Why

Now friend, listen: you don't have to know why either. God's not going to tell you why. He's not going to explain it to you. He's just going to say, "Keep your eye on the ark." You couldn't understand it if God did explain it to you. He says, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways…For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:8–9). *"For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"* (Romans 11:34). You don't have to know when. You don't have to know where. You don't have to know why. You've never been this way before. Just keep your eye on the ark. The Bible says… How are we to live? *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith"* (Hebrews 12:2). Don't run ahead of God. Don't lag behind God. When you see the ark move, go after it. Go after it. The Lord leads His people. *"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"* (Romans 8:14). That takes time, dear friend—to spend time looking at the Lord Jesus Christ to see what God is up to. That's where most of us fail. We just run out and do something even if it's wrong and then ask God to rubber-stamp our plans.

II. God is Going to Grant You the Unfading Promises

Now, there's a second thing I want to tell you. Listen, my dear friend—if you'll just keep your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, not only will He guide you through the unknown places, but friend, He will grant you the unfading promises—He will grant you the unfading promises. Now, watch—in verse 3, that ark is called *"the ark of the covenant"* (Joshua 3:3). Do you see it? *"The ark of the covenant"* (Joshua 3:3). Do you know what a covenant is? A covenant is a promise—an unfading, unfailing promise. And again, Jesus is our ark of the covenant. When the Lord Jesus Christ, at that last meal He had with His disciples, took that cup filled with the ruby red fruit of the vine, He held it up, and He said, *"This cup is the new testament in my blood"* (1 Corinthians 11:25). He is the ark of the covenant that we have. And, *"all [of] the promises of God [are] yea…and Amen"* (2 Corinthians 1:20) in Him, as we follow the ark of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will guide us through the unknown places. He will grant us the unfailing promises of God.

Now, my dear friend, listen: those promises are good for all saints; those promises are good for all seasons, and they're good for all situations. Look, if you will here, in verse 7: *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee"* (Joshua 3:7). I love that, folks: *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with [you]"* (Joshua 3:7). What was God saying to Joshua? "Joshua, the promises did not die with Moses, okay?" Now, I want to tell you something, folks: the promises didn't die with Joshua

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either. Do you know what God says to me? “Adrian, as I was with Joshua, so I will be with you.” Now friend, don’t let 2,000 years keep you from a promise. The promises are for all saints. They are for all seasons. They are for all situations. Don’t think that somehow God blessed these people—God promised these people certain things—but God won’t keep His covenant with us.

I was reading this morning a verse that really blessed me, and I want to share it with you. Turn to Psalm 119 for just a moment, and let me show you a wonderful verse. Psalm 119, verse 89: *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven”* (Psalm 119:89). You might as well quit arguing about it, folks; it’s settled in Heaven. You know, those of us who believe in the inerrancy of the Word of God, we sometimes talk about the inerrancy of the original manuscripts. And, I had a fellow say to me one time, “Well, you don’t have the original manuscripts, so how do you know they were inerrant?” I said, “Friend, it was inerrant before it ever even to a manuscript.” *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in Heaven”* (Psalm 119:89)—before it was ever even written down. You don’t have to have the manuscript; you’ve got the inerrant Word of God. *“Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven”*—now, listen to verse 90—*“Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants”* (Psalm 119:89–91).

What’s he saying? He’s just saying, “The promises that are settled in Heaven are to all generations, right on down to this present time.” And, if you want God to be real to you, if you want the promises to be bright and vital to you, just, my dear friend, put your eyes on God’s ark, and He’s going to grant to you the unfading promises because that ark is the ark of the covenant.

III. God is Going to Guard You with Unfailing Power

Now, I want to say a third thing that’s going to happen to you if you’ll say, “My New Year’s resolution is to follow the ark, and wherever it goes, I’ll go after it”—not only is He going to guide you in the uncharted places, not only is He going to grant you the unfading promises, but I’ll tell you what else He’ll do (and boy, this excites me): He will guard you—He will guard you—with unfailing power. Now, let me show you what happened here. So, Joshua says to the people, “All right. Here we are on the wrong side of the river Jordan. We’re getting ready to move into the Promised Land.” Now, here’s what happens. He says in verse 3: “When the ark moves, go after it” (Joshua 3:3).

And then, look down in verse 11, if you will—in verse 11—and watch it: *“Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan”*—now, the Jordan, of course, is a river—*“Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles*

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of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap" (Joshua 3:11–13). Have you ever seen a heap of water? You just don't heap water up. You can heap wheat up, but you don't heap water up. This is an incredible thing.

Now folks, this wasn't the ordinary time. Sometimes the Jordan River is not as wide as this auditorium. Sometimes the water is so low… I've seen it where you can just wade across, only it'd be waist deep. But, as you continue to read in this third chapter, you find out that this time that the water was up to the brim, the brink, of Jordan. There are about two or three terraces. And, our Mississippi River, as it rises, it gets wider, and deeper, and more turbulent. And, there are tamarisk trees and willow trees and things along the bank. And now, the water has come all the way up. It is a raging, mighty torrent. The water is just cascading down. The Lord says, "That river of difficulty is going to stop; the waters are going to rise up in a heap" (Joshua 3:11–13). I wonder how that was, Bob? How high did the water get? It must have been staggering. It must have been like a 20-story building—just a quivering, pulsating mass of water. Can you see it in your mind's eye just standing there? The children of Israel went through because they were guarded by the God of power.

Now, let me tell you something: Do you know why some of us don't follow God—why some of us never get into Jordan? We don't believe God. I'll give you an illustration. I hope this doesn't plow too close to the corn, but let me ask you a question: Why is it that some of you don't tithe? I'll tell you why: you don't really believe God. You see, let me give you a verse—Malachi chapter 3: *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse…and prove me"*—"put me to the test," God says—*"and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it"* (Malachi 3:10). Now, if a person believed that verse, would he tithe? Sure. I mean, who wouldn't want God to open the windows of Heaven and pour out a blessing so great he couldn't even receive it? Sure, he would tithe, if he believed it. The only reason he doesn't do it, obviously, is he doesn't believe it—you see, when disobedience is really disbelief. And, why don't people believe God? Well, they just don't know God as they ought to know Him. You see, you can't trust someone you don't know. And, if you trust someone, you will obey that one when they tell you to do something for your welfare and your good.

I heard about a tribe of Indians down in Florida; they have a church down there on a reservation. One of the remarkable things about this little Indian church is that almost all of the members—over 90% of the members—are tithers. How'd you like to pastor a church like that? You would. Almost 90% of the members are tithers. Somebody decided to find out why these Indians tithe. So, he went and asked one of them—he

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said, “Why do almost all of the members in this church tithe? The Indian said, “Well, Bible teach tithing. Indian believe Bible. Indian tithe.” May his tribe increase. Think about it: “Bible teach tithing. Indian believe Bible. Indian tithe.” See?

Well, do you know why we don’t? Do you know why we never get into Jordan, whatever it may be, that He commands us to do? It’s because we really don’t trust God. And, you know why we don’t trust God? Because we don’t know God. You can’t trust someone you don’t know. And, that’s the reason when Joshua was asking these people to do something like step into the river Jordan. He, first of all, describes the character of God, and I want you to see how he describes God.

Look, if you will, in verse 9—look in verse 9—Joshua chapter 3, verse 9: *“And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God”*—now, there he’s called *“The LORD your God”* (Joshua 3:9). He’s the sovereign Lord. Then, look in verse 10—*“And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you”*—underscore that—*“the living God”* (Joshua 3:10). He’s the Lord God; He’s the living God. And then, look, if you will, in verse 11—*“Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all of the earth”* (Joshua 3:9–11). There it is—verse 11; that’s where it is: *“Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all [of] the earth”* (Joshua 3:11). There you have three descriptions of Him: first of all, He’s the Lord your God; secondly, He is the living Lord; and, thirdly, He is the Lord of all of the earth.

A. **He is the Sovereign Lord**

Now, think about it. He’s the Lord your God—that is, He’s the sovereign Lord. He has the right to command. He’s the Lord your God. You don’t have to ask why. It’s not for you to reason and to say, “Why?” It’s yours to obey. And, if He tells you to go into the Jordan, then the Lord your God’s going to have to tell the Jordan to get out of your way. You don’t say, “Lord, stop the Jordan, and I’ll go.” You just say, “Yes, Sir, Lord.” You don’t have to say, “Lord, increase my bank account so I can tithe,” or, “Lord, show me this.” Or, you just say, “Yes, Sir, Lord”—just, “Yes, Sir, Lord.” He’s the Lord your God. He’s the sovereign Lord.

B. **He is the Living Lord**

And then, verse 10 says He is the living Lord (Joshua 3:10). And, because He’s the living Lord—that is, He’s with you—He’s not God way up in Heaven. My dear friend, when you follow the ark, everywhere you go, God goes. Look, if you will, at this wonderful verse here in verse 11. It’s such a great promise. Look at it. He says here, *“[And] the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all [of] the earth passeth [before you] over…[the] Jordan”* (Joshua 3:11). And then, he says—oh, verse 10 is what I wanted: *“Joshua said, Hereby…shall [ye] know that the living God is among you”*—how can you know that the living God is among you?—*“and that he will without fail drive out from*

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before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites" (Joshua 3:10)—and the termites and whatever else is there. Termites—that's mine. All right.

Now, listen—what he's saying is this: he's saying, "He's the living God. He's not just the sovereign God up there telling you what to do. He is the living God. He lives with you." And, what He commands you to do, He enables you to do. Every command of the sovereign God is a promise of the living God that He will perform in you and through you what He commands you to do. See, that's so great! Here were all of these enemies. But, he's saying, "Greater is He that's with you than those folks over there in that land." What does he say to us? *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). We've got something better than they had. The Lord was with them; He's in us.

Do you know there are 14.4 pounds of pressure every square inch of your body right now? Did you know the air has pressure? It's stacked; it goes way up. And, so the weight of the air puts pressure on every square inch of your skin. Literally, right now, there are tons of pressure on you—tons, the weight of the air. Why doesn't it crush you? Because you have pressure inside also to counterbalance the pressure that's on the outside; that keeps you from imploding. Now, dear friend, there's a power in you that's greater than all of the power outside of you. *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). He is the living God. You see, as the Lord your God, He's sovereign. And, as the living God, He's sufficient.

C. **He is the Lord of All the Earth**

But now, wait a minute—the next verse says, *"The LORD of all the earth"* (Joshua 3:13). Not only is He sovereign and sufficient, but, my dear friend, He is in control of every situation. He is the saving God.

I want to show you something beautiful; I'll be finished. Oh, it's so exciting. Take your Bible and look. Oh, how this warmed my heart when I read it! How my heart just jumped with joy as I read this passage! Now, he says this in verse 14: *"And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)"*—oh, it was turbulent; it was rushing. Notice—*"That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up [in one] heap very far from the city [of] Adam"* —now, my dear friend, a better rendition, a better translation, is—and if you have a *New American Standard* or a Bible like that, it will say, "At the city of Adam which is beside Zarethan, and those that came down even toward the sea of the Arabah." Do you know what the Sea of the

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Arabah is? That's the Dead Sea. Even the Salt Sea failed and was cut off. And, the people passed over right against Jericho; those were their enemies. They're right there; there's Jericho up there, and full of demon-possessed people. And, the people passed right over against Jericho. Now, watch—*"And the priests [who] bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of [the] Jordan, and all of the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until the people were passed [completely] over [the] Jordan"* (Joshua 3:14–17).

Get the picture? Here is that rushing, mighty river. Do you know what the Jordan stands for? It stands for death and judgment. Let me tell you why. The name "dan" means "judgment." Jordan is the river of judgment. It is flowing where? To the place of death, the Salt Sea, the Arabah, in the desert—the Arabah, down here, 1,300 feet below sea level. And, the sea itself is 1,300-feet-deep, the lowest place on earth. Everything that flows into it dies; it cannot live there. Here is a river of judgment that ends in death.

Now, that ark pictures who? The Lord Jesus Christ going into that river of judgment and death. And, when He enters in, that river ceases flowing—watch—all the way back to the city of Adam. *"In Adam all die…[but] in Christ…all [are] made alive"* (1 Corinthians 15:22). All the way back to Adam, those waters just pile up. No longer are they sweeping in judgment and death down to the Dead Sea. They're stopped there; a quivering mass of judgment is held back by a treasure chest of blessing there in the riverbed, and the people of God are passing through. Friend, Jesus went into the chilly waters of the river of death to stop death and judgment for you, that you might pass through.

Let me tell you something: Do you know where this happened? The Bible says, *"Over…against Jericho"* (Joshua 3:16). If you ever go to the Holy Land, you'll go to Jericho, probably, and the guide will say, "Right over there is where Jesus was baptized. Right over there, you'll be able to see the River Jordan from Jericho." And, you'll say, "Right over there is where Jesus was baptized." Do you think it was an incident that Jesus was baptized in that same spot that Ark went into the water? Because, you see, when Jesus was baptized, what was His baptism a picture of? Of His death, His burial, and His resurrection, right? You see, listen—it is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that stopped that river of judgment. That's what His baptism symbolized. And, Jesus Christ was baptized in the very same spot that that ark went and stopped the river of judgment.

Conclusion

What's God saying to us, dear friend? What is God teaching us in the threshold of a new year? That is, if we'll keep our eyes on the ark, He'll guide us through the

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uncharted places. He will grant us the unfading promises. And, He will guard us with His unfailing power. He, my friend, is the Lord your God. He is the living God. He's the God of all of the earth.

You just really just need to make one resolution: "Lord, I'm going to keep my eyes on the Ark, *'looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [my] faith'* (Hebrews 12:2). I'm just going to keep my eyes on Him, and whenever the ark moves, I'm going after it." It's one thing to have the ark in your midst; it's another thing to have the ark at your head, leading and guiding. It knows what the New Year is before, so keep your eyes on the ark.

Let's pray. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Father God, I pray that You'll seal the message to our hearts today and help us to trust You as never before. In Your holy name. Amen.

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The River of Miracles

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 25, 1977 Time: 00AM

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 3:1-5

"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."
JOSHUA 3:5

Outline

Introduction
I. The Possibility of Miracles
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Conclusion

Introduction

We could call our message this morning, "The River of Miracles," because that's what it deals with. I want you to turn to Joshua chapter 3. We're preaching through the book of Joshua; we're on a journey with Joshua. And what a thrill it has been, because Joshua is the Old Testament book that tells us of New Testament victory. I begin reading in Joshua chapter 3 and verse 1: *"And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it."* That is, "Follow the ark." *"Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you."* (Joshua 3:1–5) We could just as well say, "Sanctify

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yourself, for tomorrow the Lord will perform miracles among you."

Joshua was saying, "Get ready for Miracle Day: *'Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.'*" And here's the story of the miracle-working God. You know, it's wonderful how as we planned this day, we didn't know what we'd be preaching, but how the Lord just simply gave us the passage of Scripture as we went right on through the book of Joshua for Miracle Day, which just goes to show that all things work together for those that preach the Word. And we just simply have such a wonderful text here in Joshua chapter 3, verse 5: *"Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you."*

And the wonder that the Lord did for them was to stop the river Jordan so that they could cross the river Jordan out of the wilderness and into the land of Canaan, the land of victory. They could stop being wilderness wanderers. They could become Canaan conquerors. But between them and the land of Canaan—the land of promise, the land of opportunity, the land of milk and honey, the land of figs and grapes, and the land of pomegranates and fruit—between them and that land was the swirling Jordan River. And something had to be done about that river so they could cross over it. And God performed a miracle. When the Ark of the Covenant went down in to that river, the water stopped, and it piled up in a heap at a place called the city of Adam. And it just stood in a great towering—I suppose—quivering, pulsating heap right there, and the children of Israel went right on through.

Now I'm speaking to some of you this morning who are facing rivers of difficulty that are keeping you from your land of opportunity. You know God has more for you. You know God wants to bless you. But it seems as though there is a dark swirling river—perhaps a river of doubt, perhaps a river of weakness, perhaps a river of fear, perhaps some besetting sin, perhaps some problem—that's keeping you from receiving all that God has for you today.

Well, we want to talk about the God of miracles who's able to see you through. We used to sing a chorus,

Have you any rivers that seem to be uncrossable?
Have you any mountains you cannot tunnel through?
God specializes in things that seem impossible.
He knows a thousand ways to make a way for you.
—REVISED, ORIGINAL BY OSCAR C. ELIASON

And so this morning I want you to see—it may be tonight before I get finished this morning—I want you to see three things. First of all, I want you to see the possibility of miracles. And then, I want you to see the purpose of miracles. And then, I want you to see the preeminent miracle. And we'll see those from our text right here today, or at least from this passage of Scripture in Joshua the third chapter.

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I. The Possibility of Miracles

First of all, the possibility of miracles. Look again in chapter 3, verse 5: *"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you."* (Joshua 3:5) Now a *miracle* is the Lord doing wonders. Some people have difficulty with miracles. Friend, you won't have any difficulties believing in miracles if you believe in God, amen? A *miracle* is just simply the Lord doing wonders. And what a wonderful God we have!

Now if you don't have that kind of a God, I feel sorry for you. I saw a bumper sticker the other day—it's been around for a long time, but it's a good one. It said, "My God is alive: too bad about yours." Oh, aren't you glad that our God is a great God? It is the Lord who can do miracles.

And, you see, God is not the prisoner of His own laws. Somebody says, "Well, they're the laws of nature, and the laws of nature can't be broken." It kind of gives me a pain when I hear somebody talk about the laws of the nature. They're not the laws of nature; they're the laws of God. It's God that made everything. *God doesn't operate according to the laws of nature. Nature operates according to the laws of God.* You need to understand that. It's God that made it, not nature. Nature didn't form itself. There are no laws of nature. There are God's laws, and God can do anything with them He wants, because God Almighty made them.

Suppose a man makes a little model railroad. And he builds little box cars, and a little engine, and he's got the trestles, and he's got the tunnels, and he has the overpass, and little cross-gates, the little bells, and all of that, and he's got a little box back there, and he operates it all—you know, some men do things like that—and that little train goes around, and puffs and toots and all of this sort of stuff, and he operates it from behind this little box. Now he did it: he put it together; he assembled it.

Now, suppose he wants to get up from behind his little box and walk over and pick up an engine and just turn it around and set it on the tracks the other way: can't he do that? Of course he can! He made it all. I want to tell you, dear friend, anytime God gets ready, He can leave the control box and just reach in and do anything He wants. You see? He put it all together, and the way that God normally operates things is according to certain precepts and fundamental ways; but anytime that God wants to step into the middle of His creation and do anything He wants, He's free to do it. He has my permission, which He doesn't need, amen? He can do anything He wants, because He's God.

People say, "Well, how do you explain a miracle? How do you explain the virgin birth?" You don't explain miracles. When you can explain them, they're no longer miracles. Don't you know that? Listen. To explain miracles, you'd have to be able to explain God, and you can't explain God. And frankly, I'm glad that I have a God that I

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cannot explain. I wouldn't have any confidence—not much—in a God I could explain. I wouldn't have any in one you could explain. Listen. I'm glad that we can't explain miracles, because we cannot explain God. There are a lot of things we cannot explain or know.

Einstein, I suppose the most brilliant man who ever lived, said that he hoped before he died he would be able to understand what electricity is; he didn't even know what it is. We know what it does; we don't know what it is. We just know how to operate it, how it functions. I don't understand about electricity; but I don't intend to sit around in the dark until I do. And I don't understand, dear friend, all about God, and I don't expect to understand all about miracles; but I thank God for this verse that says, *"The LORD will do wonders."* And I'm just grateful that we have such a great God.

You know, sometimes we get these miracles, and I suppose we're a little embarrassed for the Bible. And sometimes we try to make them a little more explainable. So men traverse earth, sky, and sea to try to find fish big enough to swallow a man and keep him alive for three days because of the story of Jonah and the whale, or Jonah and the great fish. And they say, "Well, there's such-and-such a shark that has a gullet this-and-such a size. And there's such-and-such a whale that can do…" And you know they try to explain it that way. Oh, dear friend, when you explain it, you don't establish the miracle; you obliterate the miracle. Don't you understand that? If it can be done without God, then it's no longer a miracle.

Listen. God made it all. If God wanted to, God could create a fish with a refrigerator and a living room full of furniture for Jonah. You see, you don't have to worry about "Is it plausible? Is it possible?" You just admit the fact of God, the possibility of miracles. *"The LORD will do wonders."*

II. The Purpose of Miracles

Now the second thing I want you to notice is the purpose of miracles. And not all of the purposes of miracles are given here in this chapter, but some of them are. And they're worthy of our study, and I want us to look at them.

A. To Commence a Program

Number one: The first purpose of miracles is to commence a program. Notice in verse 4, the last part. He says, *"that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore."* (Joshua 3:4) Now God was starting to do something new for these people. Up until this time they'd been living in the wilderness, and now they're getting ready to receive the promises of Canaan. They're entering into a brand new era; and when they do, God seems to confirm it. God seems to do something miraculous to confirm it.

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And you will find, as you study miracles in the Bible, as I've been doing this past week, you will find that miracles seem to come in clusters at the beginning of a new age. For example, all of the miracles surrounding the creation of the world—and there were many of them. And then, secondly, the miracles surrounding the Exodus: there was another cluster of miracles. And then, the miracles surrounding the ministry of Elisha and Elijah, when God gave that great revival in the life and the ministry of these prophets. Then, the miracles around the life and ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And then, the miracles around the lives of the apostles. There were hundreds of years sometimes in between, where there were no open miracles. And then, God steps in every time He gets ready to do something new; or many times He seems to inaugurate it with a miracle so to commence a program.

I think many of us remember that first Sunday when I came here to preach at Bellevue Church. We didn't call it Miracle Sunday. We didn't know what to call it. It wasn't really a trial sermon, as such, because I didn't come to preach a trial sermon. You weren't on trial. I wasn't on trial. I didn't know what I wanted. The pulpit committee said, "We want you to come and preach." And I said, "Well, you know, I'm honored that Bellevue would want me as their pastor, but I'm just not sure. There's something that I just want to know." I said, "To take a church without preaching in it to me would be like marrying a girl without kissing her. And I just, you know, want to."

And listen, folks. You know what happened that day? I can't explain it. I wouldn't try to explain it. It certainly wasn't my preaching, because it started a long time before I preached; but the power of God rested upon this church on that Sunday morning in a way that I have never experienced in my life—the power of God was here. Now it's not just one person's opinion. I think God was just simply saying, "I'm getting ready to commence a new program, and this is my way of confirming it to you."

B. **To Confirm a Prophet**

But not only does God perform miracles to commence a program, but God also performs miracles to confirm a prophet. Look in chapter 3, verse 7: *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."* (Joshua 3:7) But God says, "The same God who was with Moses is going to be with the new man now." And God says, "I'm going to perform some miracles, not only to commence a program, but to confirm a prophet, that he's God's man."

This same thing was done in the New Testament. The apostles performed miracles for confirmation. The Apostle Paul said—and you can check it when you get home—in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 11 and 12, that miracles are done by the apostles for a confirmation of their ministry—miracles are done by the apostles for a confirmation of

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their ministry. (2 Corinthians 12:11–12)

Now, let me say this: that every person does not have to have miracles to confirm his ministry. Do you know, the greatest confirmation of a ministry, in my estimation, is not a miracle, but are people being saved. Now that's no cop out. I want you to learn something. Turn to John chapter 10 for a moment—John chapter 10. Jesus said there was not a greater man born of woman than John the Baptist. (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28) Jesus said he was more than a prophet—not just a prophet, but more than a prophet. (Matthew 11:9; Luke 7:26) John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15) And I want you to notice what the Bible says about John in the Gospel of John chapter 10 and verse 41. The Bible says, *"And many resorted unto him,"*—that is, Jesus—*"and said, John did no miracle:"*—you see, John wasn't a miracle-worker. John did no miracle—*"but all things that John spake of this man"*—that is, all things that John spoke of Jesus—*"were true. And many believed on him there."* (John 10:41–42)

Oh, John wasn't a miracle worker. John was a preacher. And the thing that John had the ability to do was to say, *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29) And the Bible says through the ministry of John the Baptist many people believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to tell you—and I mean it from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet—I had rather be able to do that than be able to raise the dead. I mean that with all of my heart: to point men to Jesus Christ. John did no miracles; but many believed on Jesus through the preaching of John the Baptist.

C. **To Comfort a People**

Now not only does God however perform miracles to commence a program, and confirm a prophet; but the third reason I want you to notice, as we go back to Joshua chapter 3, is to comfort a people. Look in chapter 3 and verse 10: *"And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites."* (Joshua 3:10) They were going into battle, and they had a little fear, as you would normally have some fear going into battle. And so God performed this miracle to comfort His people; to let them know that God was going to be with them when they went into battle to drive out the Canaanites. God is so good; but every now and then, He just gives us a miracle to comfort us. And that's not just in ancient time. God still does this to comfort His people.

You heard standing right here in this pulpit, you heard Marolyn Ford give her testimony. This dear, sweet pastor's wife, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Huttig, Arkansas, over here in Arkansas, Marolyn Ford, as a little girl, began to develop some trouble in her eyes. She could not see anything directly in front of her. She could only see the silhouette; it looked like a sort of a blob. And she could only see out with

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peripheral vision. Her parents took her to the doctor, and they said, “You have a macular deterioration, and it may get worse, and you may lose your eyesight altogether.” And she did, as a young lady.

She went to school—Tennessee Temple Schools over here in Chattanooga, a wonderful school—and she went over there to Tennessee Temple, and had to take her courses on tape recorder and play them back, and have people read to her, and had to learn to do all of the things that blind people learn—she went to a school for the blind—and to learn how to tap with a cane, and to do all of these other things. She met a young preacher over there, fell in love; they got married, had a little baby she’d not even seen; not seen her handsome husband, but loved him: *“…whom having not seen, ye love”* (1 Peter 1:8)—the Bible says the same thing about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom.

And one night after they’d been in the ministry quite a while, not so very long ago, they were coming back after a late night call—actually, it was early in the morning—and they were talking about this blindness and that it was somewhat of a hindrance to the ministry; and they were talking about the fact that God is a great God and God could heal her. That night, she was preparing for bed; and he’d already gone to bed and was reading a spiritual journal, a religious magazine. And then, he said to her, “Marolyn, God can heal you. I know God can heal you. God can heal you right now.” And he felt the faith welling up in his heart to pray this way. And he got out of his bed and got down on his knees and started to pray, and said, “God, I want you to heal my wife; and I want you to do it now; and I’m asking you to do it.”

She said, “Acie…”—that’s his name—“Acie, I see you praying.” He said, “What?” She said, “I see you praying.” Now, remember he’s saying, “Lord, I’m trusting you to do it.” He said, “No, you don’t.” She said, “Yes, I do.” He jumped up. And she said, “And you need a shave.” He jumped up and said, “What’s that?” She said, “It’s the dresser.” “What’s that?” “It’s the picture on the wall.” “What’s that?” “It’s the lamp.” He ran and got a newspaper and said, “Read the headlines.” She said, “My darling, I can read the fine print”—began to read that newspaper.

Well, they had a shouting spell for a while, and said they didn’t know what to do. They wanted to run down through the middle of the streets of that little town where they pastored and shout, and wake the town, and tell the people. They got on the telephone and called their friends and their parents, and told them to call others. They called a man in the school for the blind. He said, “Well, don’t get your hopes up too much. It may be just a temporary blip of sight, and then go.” They said, “No, we were praying. God did it! God did it!” But they said they were afraid to go to sleep, afraid that when they would wake up, it would be just some sort of a dream. But when they awakened, she could see.

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They were so thrilled. And the news spread around that little Arkansas community. Then they went for that test to the doctor—that good, kind medical doctor—and that doctor said, “First of all, let’s test your sight. Let’s see if you can see, young lady.” And he took her over there and gave her that wall chart, and said, “You read this.” And she read it up and down just like you could read it. And he said, “All right, no ifs, ands, or buts about it, you can see. Now, come here, young lady, let me look into that eye.” And he looked in, and gave a gasp, and stepped back. And he said, “You talk about a miracle: this is a bigger miracle than you thought!” He said, “Young lady, medically, you cannot see. The back of your eyes is like a mirror that’s had the quicksilver scratched off. There’s nothing there to catch and reflect an image. But,” he said, “I do not deny that you see.”

I don’t know what kind of God you serve; but that’s the kind I serve, friend—that’s the kind of God I serve. That little lady stood right here and gave that testimony. She sat in my office. I talked, I looked into those beautiful eyes of hers, and watched her; and she watched every move that I made.

Now, you explain that, friend. You don’t explain it. You believe it, and thank God for it. Now God doesn’t love Marolyn any more than He loves little blind Kim Wickes that sings here. But God every now and then in His sovereignty and in His wisdom just steps out from behind the control counter where He’s running His little railroad and says, “This is what I’m going to do, because I’m God”—“because I’m God.”

D. **To Communicate a Principle**

Oh, listen—listen: to commence a program, to confirm a prophet, to comfort a people. Oh, and listen. Let me give you another reason: to communicate a principle—to communicate a principle. Look again in chapter 3, verse 10: *“And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites.”* (Joshua 3:10)

Now these miracles in the past are to give you a principle that in the future God is going to be with you. Not that God was going to work a miracle every day—no; this miracle was only to establish a principle. What was the principle? The principle was that there was a land of opportunity and a river of difficulty. And just as God saw them through that river, God would see them through every river. Not necessarily by performing a miracle every day, see; but God establishes a principle that He is with us even on the days when there are no miracles: He’s just as much with us as on the days when there is a miracle.

Do you understand that? See? Just as much with us! Just as real! God says, “I’m going to be with you today, so that you’ll know that I’m with you even when there are no miracles.” Some people want a miracle a day to keep the devil away. That’s not the way

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God operates. Don't you know, when miracles get commonplace, they cease to be miraculous? I mean, if you see it every day, then it wouldn't have its meaning. And so God just establishes a principle, and that principle is to be a memorial of the miracle.

Look in chapter 4, verse 6, and you'll see it very clearly. God told them to take some stones and to build a monument. And then God says in verse 6, *"That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever."* (Joshua 4:6–7) It's not that they had a miracle every day; they had a memorial every day that looked back to the miracle.

You see, the miracle was to establish a principle that when we come to rivers of difficulty, whether there's a miracle, or whether there isn't, God is still with us. Do you understand what I am saying? You see, sometimes we're wanting God to repeat miracles rather than living in the power and the truths and the principle of those miracles.

For example, we have people who are praying, "O God, give us another Pentecost! God, give us another Pentecost!" Now we don't need another Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, there were *"cloven tongues like as of fire"* sitting on every man's head. (Acts 2:3) On the day of Pentecost, there was *"a rushing mighty wind"*—like a cyclone; *"it filled all the house."* (Acts 2:2) On the day of Pentecost, they spoke in strange, unknown languages, or unlearned languages. (Acts 2:4) We're not trying to repeat Pentecost—that was a miracle day. We need to enjoy Pentecost. Do you understand what I am saying? We need the power of Pentecost. We need the principle of Pentecost in our lives right now. Pentecost is a memorial day for those of us who live down through the ages, that we might know that the Holy Spirit of God is within us and He is empowering us. And the miracle of Pentecost was a memorial for today.

Or let me give you another example. In that early church in Acts chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira told a lie. They pretended that they had given everything they had to the church, when they hadn't; and God struck them dead for telling a lie. It was the first lie that was told in the fellowship of the pristine purity of that fellowship of that early church. Now God has not stricken every liar dead since then, see?

One pastor stood up in his church and he said, "Why, if God were to strike every liar dead, where would I be?" They all kind of laughed. He said, "I tell you where I'd be. Preaching to an empty house: that's where I'd be."

Oh, listen. Today, God doesn't strike every liar dead. But God did it in the beginning, in the commencement of an age, to establish a principle that God hates lying. And when God moved them through the river Jordan, God was establishing a principle that no

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matter what oppositions that you have, the Lord our God will be with us. And that's a wonderful thing to know. And how I thank God that He is communicating this principle!

So, you see, my life is to be a miracle. I mean, every day I'm to live in the supernatural. But I'm to be supernaturally natural; and then, I'm naturally supernatural. And, incidentally, I'm going to be preaching on that tonight.

III. The Preeminent Miracle

Now, let's go on to the last point; and I want us to think not only about the purpose of miracles, but I want us to think about the preeminent miracle. And I want you to get ready for a blessing, because there's one in what we're about to say. Look now in chapter 3, verse 11, of Joshua: *"Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan."* That is the ark. Now, boys and girls, the ark was a piece of furniture. When we say an *ark*, don't get the idea of a boat. An *ark* is not a boat. Noah's ark was a boat, but an *ark* means "a chest of safety, a repository, a chest"; think of a chest, a piece of furniture for safekeeping—*"Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam,"*—actually, that's not a good translation. It should be "at the city of Adam"—"at the city of Adam"—*"that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."* (Joshua 3:11–17)

Now, what does this talk about? Oh, friend, listen. I believe here's one of the most marvelous and wonderful illustrations in all of the Old Testament about the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! That ark, without any shadow of a doubt, that symbolized to them the presence of God in the midst of His people, is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is our ark of safety. The gold of that ark spoke of His deity. The wood of that ark spoke of His humanity. That ark represented the Lord

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Jesus Christ.

Now, what does the river Jordan speak of? The very word *Jordan* in the Bible means "judgment"—"judgment." The Jordan was a river of judgment and the river of death. It flowed from the beautiful Sea of Galilee down into the Salt Sea—the Dead Sea. Symbolically, geographically, it speaks of death and it speaks of judgment.

Now the ark represents Jesus; Jordan represents death and judgment; and that ark went down into the Jordan. And that ark came up out of the Jordan just as our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized into the Jordan and came up out of the Jordan. And do you know where our Lord was baptized? At this same spot. You study your Bible history: at this same spot where that ark went into the Jordan and came out of the Jordan. You go visit the Holy Land and you'll find out they'll say, "That's where Joshua passed over." And they say, "Incidentally, that's where Jesus was baptized." No, it wasn't incidentally, although at that same spot, where Jesus, our ark of covenant, went into the Jordan River. He was baptized into the Jordan; He came up out of the Jordan, which spoke of His death, burial, and resurrection for our sins.

And I want you to know, dear friend, when that Ark of the Covenant went into the Jordan River, the waters of death and judgment stopped flowing all the way back to the city of Adam. Praise the Lord, all the way back to the city of Adam, the waters of death and the waters of judgment were stopped, that the people of God might go through! What a wonderful Savior we have! Oh, what a wonderful Bible we have! Tucked away here in the Old Testament is an illustration of the greatest miracle.

The miracle of all miracles is not the raising of Lazarus, not going through the Red Sea, not opening the eyes of the blind; the miracle of miracles is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ that enables us to have a new birth. And I'll tell you why it's such a great miracle.

A. Great Because of Its Cost

First of all, it's great because it cost more than any other miracle. God made all of this with the flick of his fingertips.

One college student was asking his pastor this question. He said, "Pastor, do you think there's life on other planets?" The pastor said, "No, I really don't." He said, "You mean, in all of those millions and billions of other worlds out there, you don't believe there's a life." He said, "No, not like we know it." And then he said, "Well, why did God go to all that trouble to make all of those things?" And the pastor said, "What trouble?" Amen? Think about it: what trouble?

And there they are—I mean, just off His fingertips: He spoke, and it was so. And the only time God ever went to trouble to do anything was at Calvary. It was Calvary that broke the heart of God. I tell you that the new birth is the greatest miracle, because it

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has the greatest cost.

B. Great Because of Its Consequence.

It's the greatest miracle, because it has the greatest consequences.

Did you know that you can take a piece of ash and analyze it, and it's made of carbon? You can take a diamond and analyze it, and it's made of carbon, too; but what a transformation! There's a greater transformation when you're born again.

A little girl said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save cinders." She wasn't far wrong. Oh, if you've got sort of a burned-out life—you just feel like you're useless and wasted—I want to tell you that the greatest miracle is the transformation.

Hallelujah! what a Savior,
Who can take a poor lost sinner,
Lift him from the miry clay and set him free!
I will ever tell the story,
Shouting, "Glory, glory, glory!"
Hallelujah! Jesus ransomed me.
—JULIA H. JOHNSTON

C. Great Because of Its Confirmation.

Great because of its cost. Great because of its consequences. And great because of its confirmation. Now you draw up real close and listen. There are some of you who are thinking, "You know, if I could just have a miracle; you know, if God would just do one miracle for me; oh, what a believer I would be!" Have you ever felt that way? "O Lord, do this; now, Lord, you just make that chair move from this side of the room to that side of the room," or, "Lord, you do something like this: boy, what a follower I would be!"

No, that's not the way God works, friend; that is not the confirmation that you need. Miracles like that are cheap, and God will not perform magic to convince you. The great confirmation is the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, let's just suppose that you were to die and stand before the Lord, and the Lord were to say to you, "Now, why should I let you into my heaven?" Suppose you were saying, "Why, Lord, I was praying, and miraculously an angel appeared to me; I saw a beautiful shining angel; and therefore, Lord, I know I'm saved." The old devil who'd be there at the judgment would laugh and point a fiery finger of accusation at you, and say, "You fool! That angel that you saw: that was me." Second Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 14 says, "For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14) You wouldn't know that you are saved because you have the miracle of the appearance of an angel to you.

Suppose you were to stand before the Lord, and the Lord were to say, "And why should I let you into my heaven?" You would say, "O dear God, a wonderful miracle

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happened in my life. One night I was praying, and I saw a great ball of fire come down out of heaven. O God, it was glorious! And therefore I expect to go to heaven." And I read here in Revelation chapter 13, beginning in verse 13, that the devil himself—listen: *"And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast."* (Revelation 13:13–14)

Did you know, ladies and gentleman, that miracles could deceive you? Did you know that that the Bible says in Matthew 24:24 in the last days there will be miracle workers who do signs and wonders and deceive many people. (Matthew 24:24) Why is the new birth such a great miracle? It is so great—and not only in its cost, and not only in its consequences, but in its confirmation. Do you know the devil would say, "I made that ball of fire come down out of heaven to deceive you"?

Friend, you need something better than that. When I stand before the Lord, and He says, "Adrian, why should I let you into my heaven?" do you know what I'm going to do if He says that to me? I'm going to say, "Lord, you said in your Word in 1 John chapter 5, verse 13, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."* (1 John 5:13) And then the argument is no longer with me and the devil; it's with the devil and the Word of God. And who do you think is going to win? The greatest miracle—the greatest miracle, the greatest miracle—is the miracle of the new birth. It's great because of its cost, its consequences, and its confirmation.

Conclusion

Praise God, I know that I know that I'm born again. Do you?

It took a miracle to put the stars in place;
It took a miracle to hang the world in space.
But when He saved my soul,
Cleansed and made me whole,
It took a miracle of love and grace!
—JOHN W. PETERSON

And I want to tell you there is a river of death and judgment that's flowing right now. And only the Lord Jesus Christ can stop it for you so you can go on through. Are you willing to let Him? That's the greatest miracle. Today can be the first day of the beginning of your new life. You can move from out of the wilderness and go into the Canaan, the Promised Land, of your possession.

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Getting Ready for a Miracle

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 21, 1987 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 3:3-10

"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves:
for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."
JOSHUA 3:5

Outline

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Introduction

Take God's Word, please, and turn to the Book of Joshua, chapter 3. And, in just a moment, we're going to look together in verse 5. Before I read verse 5, I want to give you the background: the children of Israel had come right to the threshold of their Canaan. They were about to cross over the river Jordan. They were about to enter into the land; they were about to possess their possessions.

God had for them a land that flowed with milk and honey, a land of abundance, a land of great promise, a land of great plenty. But, between them and that land there lay a river of difficulty. It was the river Jordan, and at this time of the year the river was swollen. It wasn't just a little river; it covered a great territory, and it was seemingly impossible for them to get through the river Jordan and into the land. And, God performed a miracle, and God got them in. We used to sing a little chorus a long time ago:

Have you any rivers
That seem to be uncrossable?
Have you any [mountains]
That you cannot tunnel through?

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—LIZZ WRIGHT

God specializes in things that seem impossible. He knows a thousand ways to make a way for you, and that's the thing that I'm going to be talking about today: "Getting Ready for a Miracle." Bellevue Baptist Church, in this day and in this age, has to get ready for a miracle. We're getting ready to possess our possessions. We're getting ready to claim our Canaan. Next Sunday evening at 6:30, we're going to have groundbreaking at Canaan. It's going to one of the most remarkable, unusual services—I can say without fear of contradiction—that you have ever been in, so far as a groundbreaking service is concerned. But, I want to prepare your heart; I want to prepare your mind. I want you to get set; I want you to get ready. And so, therefore, I'm speaking to you today on "Getting Ready for a Miracle."

Look at our text: *"And Joshua said unto the people"*—this is Joshua chapter 3 and verse 5—*"And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders [for] you"*—*"Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders [for] you"* (Joshua 3:5). Do you have any rivers that seem to be uncrossable? Have you any mountains you cannot tunnel through? God specializes in things that seem impossible. He knows a thousand ways to make a way for you, for me, and for Bellevue Baptist Church. Now, I want us to think about miracles, because, dear friend, if we do what God has told us to do, in a very real sense, the doing of it will be a miracle. And, on the other hand, if we could do it without a miracle, in my estimation, it would not be worth the doing.

I. The Possibility of Miracles

Now, first of all, I want you to think with me about the possibility of miracles, for a miracle is the Lord doing wonders. *"Sanctify yourself"*—that means "set yourself apart; get ready"—*"for to morrow the LORD will [work] wonders among you"* (Joshua 3:5). I want to say, dear friend, that our God is a wonder-working God.

Now, the secular humanist—he doesn't believe in miracles. But, the sad thing is that some who occupy the churches in America today don't believe in miracles. If they don't believe in miracles, I wonder what kind of a God they have. Do you remember back when they were saying, "God was dead"—and, by the way, aren't you glad that "God is dead" is dead? I mean, that's passé—but, back in the middle of that, I saw a bumper sticker that really blessed my heart. It said this: "My God is alive; too bad about yours." Amen! Our God is alive and living! God is a God of miracles.

You don't have any difficulty with miracles if you can get past the first book in the Bible: *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). If you can get past just one verse, you're not going to have any difficulty with miracles thereon. I mean, God made it all, and the God who made it all is not a prisoner of what He made.

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People say, “Well, God always operates according to the laws of nature.” There are no laws of nature. Nature operates according to the laws of God. There are no laws of nature; they’re God’s laws. God made everything, and since God made everything, He can do with what He made as He pleases.

When I was a boy, I used to have a model railroad train—a model train—and I put the tracks together and ran it all—had a lot of fun with it. And, as soon as my grandson gets old enough, I’m looking forward to having another one—a model train that I can make go, and back up, and all of these things. And, I sit there at the controls, and I could back it up; and I could switch the engine, and make it go here and there. And, I put the thing together, and I had a plan for running it. But, in the middle of that, if I wanted to get up from the controls and walk over right in the middle and pick up a boxcar and turn it around, wasn’t that my prerogative? Of course. Now, God made the universe and God says, “I’m going to run the universe a particular way.” But, if God just wants to step right in the middle of the thing and do something, can’t He do that? Of course He can! He is—He’s God; He is God. And so, we just, first of all, have to admit the possibility of miracles, because God is God.

You say, “Well, I can’t have any faith in anything I can’t understand.” Friend, listen, most of you don’t even understand how a windshield washer wiper works. Oh, you know it goes back and forth, but you don’t know what makes it go back and forth. An engineer would know, but even an engineer doesn’t understand some of the simpler things. You tell me how a black cow can eat green grass and get white milk that churns yellow butter. There are a lot of things we don’t understand. Folks, *I wouldn’t have any confidence in a God that I could understand.* I’m grateful that there is a God, and He just says, *“Sanctify [yourself]: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you”* (Joshua 3:5).

So, we believe in a miracle God. I believe in a God of might and of miracle, a God who is not a prisoner of His own laws and of His own ways. Now, sometimes we get a little embarrassed for God, and we try to make it easy for God or make it explainable. For example, the story of Jonah and the fish—you know, people move Heaven and earth to try to find a fish large enough to swallow man and keep him alive three days and three nights. Well, friend, don’t do that. If you found one, then that would just take the miraculous out of it, and say, “Big deal, that’s all explainable.” But, the point is that God prepared a fish. God prepared a fish; and if God had wanted to, He could have prepared a fish with three rooms of furniture, a color television, and a refrigerator. God prepared a fish—that’s the whole point. Don’t leave God out of the miracle business.

II. The Purpose of Miracles

All right, I want to move from that, however, and talk to you not primarily about the

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possibility of miracles—because I think we're pretty all well agreed on the possibility of miracles—but I want you to think with me about the reason for miracles, or the purpose of miracles; that will be the purpose of our second point. Let me give you four purposes of miracles, and I want us to keep this in our mind, as we possess our possession, as we claim our Canaan, as these people claimed their Canaan so long ago.

Now, let me tell you the miracle that God did for these people so long ago—here was the miracle: there was an ark called the "ark of the covenant." It was a chest about the size of this pulpit—a chest, a treasure chest of blessings. And, I'm going to show you later on that ark pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. And, in order for them to get into the land of Canaan, the priest took the ark; it was carried on poles, or staves, and they carried it right into the middle of the river Jordan. As they stepped into the river Jordan, the water stopped flowing and just piled up in a heap, and they set the ark down in the middle of the river Jordan. It was an absolute miracle, and the people went through on dry ground—the only way they could have gotten into the land. There were no airlifts; there were no pontoon bridges or anything like this. It was an absolute miracle. Now, that was the miracle. Why did God do that, and why did God do it at this particular time? Why did God say to Joshua, in Joshua, say to the people, "Tomorrow is going to be a day of miracles" (Joshua 3:5)? I want to give you four basic reasons:

A. To Commence a Program

First of all, God performs miracles when He wants to commence a program. When God is about to do something new, when God is about to do something different, so many times God confirms it with a miracle. Now, back up to verse 4; we started in verse 5, but look in verse 4. God says this—well, in verse 3: *"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it"*—that is, "Follow it"—*"Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go"*—now, underscore this phrase—"*for ye have not passed this way heretofore"* (Joshua 3:3–4). "You've never been here before. This is a new departure, and because it's a new departure—you've not been this way before—I'm going to commence it with a miracle."

God often does miracles to commence a program, just to let people know that He is in it, that He is with them, that this is God's plan, that it has God's stamp of approval on it. You're going to find in the Bible that when God begins a new ethic, when God begins a new age, when God commences a new program, often He puts a stamp of approval on it with a miracle.

And, therefore, miracles came in clusters in the Bible. Miracles were not consistent all the way through the Bible. There were times when there would be no miracles, and

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then there would be times when there would be a great abundance of miracles. Now, you have a little bit of Bible history, and some have a lot of Bible history. But, you can remember, for example, there were a lot of miracles around the creation. All creation was a miracle. The creation of the world—that's a cluster of miracles. And then, miracles seem to dwindle until you came to the time of the Exodus: God bringing His people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, and again, you have a cluster of miracles. And then, miracles seem to dwindle; and then, with the commencing of the ministry of Israel's prophets, with Elijah and Elisha, God gave again a cluster of miracles. And, there were miracles that attended the ministry of Elisha and Elijah, and then miracles seem to dwindle. And then, when our Lord came in New Testament times, and again the New Testament era, His ministry was confirmed with miracles. As Nicodemus said, *"No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"* (John 3:2). And, there was that cluster of miracles. And then, in the ministry of the apostles and the apostolic church, as our Lord was beginning their ministry, there was a cluster of miracles. What I'm saying is that God says, "You've not passed this way before. I'm starting something new; I'm starting something different. And, therefore, I'm going to put the stamp of authenticity upon it." I just believe that God does that.

I think that God did something like that for us here at Bellevue Baptist Church. I can remember in 1972, when, in August, when I preached for the first time here in this church. I did not feel inclined to come and be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church—not because I didn't want to, not because I didn't think this was a glorious church; I really felt unworthy to be the pastor of this church. But, I felt that God had me in a place down there in Florida where He wanted me, and I was in a church that God was blessing. And, Brother Whitmire and I were ministering together down there at the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Florida, and this pulpit committee began to talk to me, and they said, "We believe that God wants you to be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church." Well, I did not have that witness in my heart. I didn't believe; I just didn't know. It didn't seem to be reasonable, feasible, that I would leave this place that God was blessing so much down there in Florida. But, I did agree to pray with them about it.

And, they said, "We want to present your name to the congregation for vote." I said, "Well, most times when a preacher is going to be voted on for a church, he first of all preaches down there at the church, and the people looked him over, and he looks the people over." They said, "Well, we don't do it that way at Bellevue Baptist Church. No preacher has ever preached trial sermon. We will just present you. And, the church, we believe, has confidence in us, and the church will accept that recommendation." I said, "Well, that may be well and good, but for me to take a church without preaching in it would be like kissing a girl without marrying her—marrying a girl without kissing her first. By the way, I didn't kiss my wife before we were married. She wasn't my wife before we

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were married. But, you know, you just, before you marry a girl, at least you want to kiss her to see if that chemistry is there, or whatever, you know. And, I said, "I would just…I don't know whether I want to even come, like what you call a 'trial sermon,' but I would like to go up to Memphis, Tennessee, and just preach—just be a supply preacher." And, they said, "Well, suppose then you decide not to come," and I said, "Well, I just don't know, but I think we can at least go that far."

And so, I came here—and if you were here on that Sunday morning—to preach, God performed a miracle that Sunday morning. Now, it wasn't my doing; it was your doing. It was God's doing, because God performed the miracle before I ever preached. When I came in and sat down in that chair—and before I got in here—God had already gotten into this room. And, the Spirit of God, and the presence of God, and the reality of God was unmistakably in this place—unmistakably. And, not just one person said it—hundreds of people who know God and walked with God said, "I've never been in a service where God got there first in such a way to walk in here was to walk into the presence of God." And, God was all over this place. When that choir began to sing "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," Tommy Lane led the choir. It was awesome; it was frightening. The church—I preached—and the church voted unanimously to call me as the pastor of this church.

I was back there in the study. I didn't know what you were doing after the service. I didn't know you were having a business meeting—I thought maybe a report or something. But, when I came out, the pulpit committee said to me—standing right here, the chairman said, "Dr. Rogers, we're asking you to be our pastor right now; we just voted to call you." And, I'm standing over here. I wasn't expecting him to say that, and everybody is sitting out there. I thought, "Well, I'd come up here and talk, and I'd go back and pray." And, I opened my mouth, and I heard myself saying—I don't know what I said, which I would not have told you what it would have been until I heard it, which was, "All right, I accept." And, I thought, "My God, what have I done? What have I said?" But, I tell you why that happened—and I look back with hindsight, and I know that that was God's will. And, I know that was God's plan, as I look back at what God did—but, dear friend, I believe that God worked a miracle for us that day because God knew that I needed it and that we needed it. And, I would have been so confused, because I could have given you so many reasons why I should not have come, and they would have all been false because God had another plan.

But, when God wants to commence a program, when God wants to do something—so many times God, in His own way, just steps in to say, "All right, this is right." God confirms it. I believe God confirmed it the night we voted to buy that property. I saw God move into this building. It was, again, a great time when God the Holy Spirit just moved upon us to confirm that was His will.

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B. To Confirm a Prophet

But, not only does God perform a miracle to commence a program—God also performs a miracle to confirm a prophet. Notice in verse 7: *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee"* (Joshua 3:7). Moses had been their great leader; and now, Moses was dead, and God says, "I'm going to do something supernatural. I'm going to do something Joshua to confirm you in their minds so that they will know that you are a man of God." And so, often God does that to put the stamp of authenticity on it.

God did that with the apostles. You can read about it; we'll not turn to it. But, in 2 Corinthians 12, verses 11 and 12, Paul, in defending his apostolic authorities, said, "Were not the work of the apostles, signs and wonders and miracles done at my hand. That's one of the ways people can know that I am an apostle" (2 Corinthians 12:11–12). And so, many times God, in order to confirm a prophet, will perform a miracle.

C. To Comfort a People

But, not only to commence a program and not only to confirm a prophet, but God also performs miracles just to comfort a people—to comfort a people. Notice God knew that these people were frightened; and so, look in verse 10: *"And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you"* (Joshua 3:10). Now, God says, "I'm going to do this—this miracle—that you just know that there's a God. And, He's not a dead God; He's a living God, and He's in your midst. And, therefore, you will know that the living God is among you." Now, God did not do miracles constantly for these people, but God did for them. What He does for us—that, every now and then, He just drops a miracle in our laps to remind us that He's still alive—just drops a miracle down. And, these miracles come sovereignly, and as they become supernaturally, and as they come suddenly, you'll not be able to categorize it; you'll not be able to explain them, because God is a sovereign God, But, God, in His wisdom—God, in His time—God just drops a miracle on us now and then just to comfort His people.

In this city, there is a lady known as Marilyn Ford. Her husband is the associate pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, right here in this city. Reverend A. C. Ford…two of the loveliest, sweetest Christians that you'll ever know. Marilyn Ford, as a young girl, lost her eyesight, became legally blind; she could not see, had to walk with a cane, went to a school for the blind. She had a degenerative disease—macular deterioration in her eyes—was not able to see. She went to Tennessee Temple University over here Chattanooga. She wanted to serve the Lord; she had to tape record her classes and so forth. People had to help her around; she was legally blind. She met this young preacher over here. They fell in love; they got married. She had children. She'd never

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seen the face of her husband; she'd never seen the face of her children. They talked about how wonderful it would be if she could see, but they resigned themselves to the fact that God did not want her to see. That was fine; they would serve the Lord anyway. And, she went with him on pastoral visitation as a blind person, did her housework, and helped as a pastor's wife, as a blind person, and saying, "That's all right, Lord." But, they did what you would have done, what I would have done: they'd asked God repeatedly, "God, heal Marilyn, if it be Your will." But, it medically was an irreversibly thing—no way to do this: not by medicine, not by surgery or any other way. It was medically impossible.

And so, on a particular night, they'd been out late; it was past midnight. They were driving home talking about this—talking about what a wonderful thing it would be if God would heal Marilyn of her blindness. A. C. got in bed first; he was reading a theological journal, and he said to Marilyn, "Marilyn, I'm going to ask God right now if He will heal you." And, he got down out of bed, and kneeled, and said, "God, I ask You in the name of Jesus, right now, to heal Marilyn." Marilyn said, "A.C., I can see." He said, "What?" She said, "I can see." He said, "What can you see?" She said, "I can see you, and you need a shave." He got so excited; he got a newspaper that was lying there, and he said, "Can you read the headlines?" She said, "A.C., I can read the fine print," and she began to read that newspaper to him. They got so excited—they didn't know what to do. They felt like they needed to get outside, and run up and down the streets of the city, and wake the town, and tell the people. They got on the telephone and begin to call loved ones and parents; they said they were afraid to go to sleep—afraid that when they waked, it may be a dream. They went to the doctor; the doctor gave the test of the eye chart. He said, "I confirm you can see. Now, let me have a look in those eyes." And then, he stepped back, and he said, "I want to tell you, there's something happened that I do not understand." He said, "From my test, from what has happened on the inside of your eyes, you're still blind. The back of your eyes are like a mirror that's had the quicksilver removed. There's nothing to stop and reflect what you're seeing, but I can tell that you see." And, if you were to meet Marilyn Ford—which you can meet her, she's right here in our city—and look in those beautiful blue eyes of hers, and see what God has done for this woman…God performed a miracle.

Now, we have blind people in our church. God doesn't always heal those, and every time somebody crossed the river Jordan from this time on God didn't stop the river Jordan. People had to swim through, wade through, walk through—whatever they had to do. But, God didn't do it all the time, but God does it enough to let us know that the living God is among us—to let us know, dear friend, that our God is a God of might and miracles.

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D. To Communicate a Principle

God performs a miracle sometimes to commence a program, sometimes to confirm a prophet, sometimes to comfort a people, but primarily—and I want you to listen—God does it to communicate a principle, and that's where I really want us to bear down. Look again in verse 10: *"And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you"*—now, watch it, and don't miss this—*"and that he will without fail"*—hallelujah—*"drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites"* (Joshua 3:10). Now, what God is saying is, "I'm going to do this. This miracle is simply to commemorate a principle that I am able." Now, God did not—every time they came to fight a Jebusite, or a Canaanite, or a Perizzite, or a Termite, or whatever they were fighting—God did not perform a miracle again. I mean, it was warfare, and they did it with blood, sweat, and tears. And yet, they were doing it in the power of God. You see, there's a principle that when, dear friend, when you do anything in the name of God, the God who performed these miracles is the same God that is within you, in your everyday work, your everyday walk. See, that's the wonderful thing—there's a principle that even though there may not be a classic miracle, everything you do, in sense, is a miracle, because God is in you, and God is with you, and you cannot fail when you trust God. And, therefore, we're naturally supernatural and supernaturally natural. And, the very doing of everything is, in sense, a miracle, because God is with us.

Now, God does these actual miracles, these physical… "*And these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever"* (Joshua 4:7). Now, what does that mean? Dear friend, God is saying that miracles are memorials. Now, we just look back, and we see what God has done. And friend, I tell you that we have greater miracles, as I'm going to show you in a moment, and it's the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have a greater miracle than their drying of the river Jordan: it is the ascension—the enthronement—of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, why did God do a miracle? Well, God does a miracle. We know miracles are possible—and why? What are the purposes of miracles? Well, here, to commence a program, to confirm a prophet, to comfort a people, and to communicate a principle, that the very doing of our lives, the very living of our lives—as we look back to these physical miracles—we understand our very lives themselves are a spiritual miracle.

And, every day is to be lived in the power of God. And, the same God that dried up the river Jordan is the God that would be with them in their every task as they went to drive out those Canaanites, stands the same God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, is the God that's going to help us build these buildings and to win these people to Jesus Christ. Though we do it with our very own hands, the doing of it will be God in us, because, dear friend, we work from a miracle, and God is communicating a principle.

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We're about to cross Jordan—and friend, we need God. And, the same God who is the miracle-working God is the God who is going to help us to do what we need to do.

III. The Preeminent Miracle

One last thing I want to say to you. I've talked to you about the possibility of miracles. I've talked to you about the purpose of miracles. Let me talk to you finally about a preeminent miracle. There is, in this story, something very wonderful. And, I'm going to continue the message tonight, and the message tonight is going to be called "A Recipe for a Miracle," and I don't want you to miss it.

But, I want you to look here, as we spend…just at the time of his harvest: *"That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea"*—we call it today the "Dead Sea"—*"failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho"* (Joshua 3:16). Now, look in verse 16. It says that "the waters were cut off very near or away from the city of Adam." That is a difficult and not a very accurate translation. If you have a different translation, you will see it says that "the waters were cut off at the city of Adam" (or the *New American Standard* says it that way). Others—"the waters were cut off at the city of Adam." It's very important—that ark going into the river of Jordan is a picture of Jesus Christ. What does *Jordan* mean? *Jordan* means "judgment." The word *dan*, in the Bible, means *judgment*. That's a translation of the word. *Jordan* means "river of judgment."

Now, when the ark went into the river of judgment—the ark being Jesus—the river of judgment flowed where? Down to the Salt Sea. What is the Salt Sea? The Dead Sea, because judgment brings death. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). *"The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die"* (Ezekiel 18:4; Ezekiel 18:20). That's the judgment of God. But, when that ark went into that river, the water stopped all the way back to the city of Adam. *"In Adam all die, [but] in Christ…all [are] made alive"* (1 Corinthians 15:22). And, Jesus Christ stopped the water of judgment, that the people of God might go through. What a blessing! And, do you know where that ark entered? I'll tell you where that ark entered: that ark entered into the river of Jordan exactly the same place where Jesus Christ was baptized many years later. Jesus knew what He was doing when He went to that place to be baptized. In the same place that that ark went into that water, Jesus went into the water. And, when He was buried in that water, it pictured His death. And, when He came up out of that water, it pictured His resurrection. And, because of His death, His burial, His resurrection, the water of judgment was stopped all the way back to Adam. Hallelujah!

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Conclusion

Now friend, let me tell you something. You say, “I want a miracle.” You’ve got one—the new birth. You’ve got one. That is a greater miracle, and I’ll tell you it’s a greater miracle, first of all, because of its cost. When God stopped the river Jordan a long time ago, that didn’t cost Him anything, He just spoke, and it was done. But, when God stopped the river of judgment for you, it cost His own dear Son, who died in agony and blood—a greater miracle because of His cost and a greater miracle because of its consequences.

There’s no greater miracle than the new birth. Oh, my dear friend, if you only understood that you are a miracle!

Did you know that if you look in your fireplace and you see those ashes, do you know what those ashes are? They’re carbons. Lady, you look on your finger and you see that diamond, do you know what that diamond is? It’s carbon. One is carbon in humiliation; the other is carbon in glory. The same God who made them both made the one out of the other; He made the diamond out of the coal.

A little girl said, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save cinders”—friend, that’s true. He changes us. What a miracle!

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How to Arrive at Your Destination Without a Map

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 30, 2001 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 3:3-13

"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it."
JOSHUA 3:3

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Introduction

Find in God's Word Joshua chapter 3—Joshua chapter 3.

There's a story of an old boat that was in the sea on a dark and stormy night—it's always a dark and stormy night with these stories—and the boat was chugging along. And the waves were very rough, and a passenger onboard was somewhat worried. And he knew it was an old boat. He went to the captain. He said, "Captain, are we safe?" The captain said, "Well, let's put it this way: This is a leaky, creaky old boat, and we're

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in very stormy weather; so we may sink. And," he said, "I'll tell you something else: The boilers on this old boat are very weak and may explode at any moment. And so," he said, "we may go down, or we may go up. But at any rate, we're going on."

Now, what about this new year? Well, friend, we may go down. Some of us may die this coming year, is that not true? I mean, those of you who are very healthy—a sudden accident. We may go down, or we may go up. Jesus may come in this coming year; we may go up. But whether we go down or whether we go up, friend, we're going on, aren't we? I mean, we're going on. The new year is coming. And what I want to give to you this morning from the Word of God is a formula to reach your destination without a map: "How to Reach Your Destination Without a Map."

Now the story that we're going to study today comes from the Old Testament. And God is leading the children of Israel—they've come out of the land of Egypt, and they're going into their Promised Land. Now their Promised Land was a land of opportunity, but it was also a land of mystery. As we're going to see, Joshua said to them, "You've not come this way before. This is a brand new day. You've never been here before. You are launching out both into opportunity and to mystery." "Well," you say, "what does that have to do with me?" Well, the Bible says, concerning those wilderness wanderings of God's ancient people so long ago, "All of these things happened to them for examples to us." (1 Corinthians 10:11) So we can take this Old Testament history and just shout our way through it, because there are incredible lessons in these Old Testament stories.

Now Israel was going into the great unknown. Again, they were going into their Promised Land, the land of opportunity, but as we're going to see, also a land of mystery; and besides all of that, between them and that land there was a river of difficulty. Now you're going into a land of opportunity; you are going into a land of mystery, and there are rivers of difficulty—you got all that?

Now, let's see if we can learn some lessons as to how to arrive at our destination without a map. Joshua 3, beginning in verse 3: *"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see"*—underscore this phrase now—*"the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure:"*—and, by the way, that would be about a half a mile—*"come not near unto it,"*—that is, "to the ark"; now, watch this; here's the key—*"that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore."* (Joshua 3:3–4) That is, "It's all new!" There's a brand new day, there's a brand new way, and it's a land of mystery. Now, keep your eye on the ark, and don't move till the ark moves.

Now, what is this ark? Underscore that phrase: *"the ark of the covenant of the LORD."* (Joshua 3:3) It was a piece of furniture that later on had a central place in the

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Holy of Holies in the temple. The ark was just about the size of this pulpit. It was about two feet by two feet by about four feet—a little piece of furniture. Inside were the commandments of God, Aaron's rod that budded, and a little bit of manna. On top was a slab of solid gold. On one side was the figurine of an angel, a cherub. On the other side of this was the figurine of a cherub with the wings spread out over its particular place, and that was called the Mercy Seat. And the high priest would come and sprinkle blood upon that slab of gold to make atonement for the sins of the people, and the Shekinah glory of God just hovered right there.

Now, what is that all about? What does that speak to Adrian about? What does that tell you? Well, that ark in the Old Testament was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. It symbolized the life of God, the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, the presence of God, the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of that pictures Jesus. Jesus is the Ark of the Covenant—do you understand that? If you don't understand that, you'll miss it all. That is a picture, a prophecy, a type, an illustration, of Jesus in the Old Testament.

Now, keep all of that in mind and we're going to talk to you about how to arrive at your destination without a map. Now this is going to be a new day, but this is something that has changed. And what has changed? Go back to Joshua 3, verses 3 and 4: *"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it"*—that is, "When the ark moves, you move." *"Yet there shall be space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore."* (Joshua 3:3–4)

Now, what's all of this about? Well, what had changed was this: Up until this time, the ark had been in their midst; it had been in the camp. And when they moved, the ark moved. But now, here's a new day. They're going into a new land; they're coming out of the wilderness. No longer is the ark going to go with them; they're going to go with the ark. There's a difference. Now the ark is out in front. He says, "Take the ark from your midst; put it out here in the front. Keep your eye on it, and don't move until it moves. That's going to be the way of victory; that's going to be the way you're guided." Now when they were in the wilderness, they were not living in victory. But as we're going to see, the ark is about to lead them into victory.

Are you ready to come out of the wilderness and into your Promised Land? Are you ready to cross over a river of difficulty into your Promised Land? Well, you're going to have to move with the ark.

What is the difference in some Christians? How do some Christians live in victory, and other Christians not? Do you think that God plays favorites? Do you think God says,

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“Eenie, meenie, miney, moe. I’m going to give you victory. And none for you”? No. What is the difference? I’ll tell you the difference: All Christians have the Lord Jesus Christ. If you don’t have Jesus, you’re not a Christian. The Holy Spirit is in all of us, but not all Christians are totally following the Lord Jesus Christ. They have Him in their midst, but He’s not out in front leading. When Jesus is Lord and leader, when He’s out in front and you follow Him, that is what makes the difference. The difference, friend, is not in possession; it is in position. Now you have the Lord. The question is: Are you following Him? Is He leading you? Is He out front of you? Is He guiding you into this land of opportunity, the new year, this land of mystery, the new year, through rivers of difficulty, the Jordan that separates the wilderness from the Promised Land?

Now I’m just setting the stage. I want to give you three things to do. Now, folks, believe me, God has a plan, a destination, for you, for every mother’s child of you. God has a plan for as many people as there are in this room—individual plans. He makes no two snowflakes alike; He has a plan directly, distinctly, for you. Now with all of this in mind, the ark, representing the Lord Jesus Christ, a treasure chest of blessing; and God saying, “Set it out there in the midst; and when it moves, move with it,” may I give you three principles? Here are three things that you can do to arrive at your destination without a map.

I. Let Jesus Guide You with His Presence

Number one: Let Jesus guide you with His presence—let Jesus guide you with His presence. Now, notice what He says: *“And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it,”*—that is, they carried it on their shoulders—*“then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.”* (Joshua 3:3–4) What an adventure—what an adventure! They’d never been there. There’s a Promised Land—they’ve not seen it. And he says, “You are going into unexplored territory.”

Now, why don’t you need a map? Well, *God’s will for you is not a roadmap, but a relationship.* The important thing for you is not to know what the future holds; the important thing for you is to keep your eye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

A few days ago, we got our family together to go look at the Christmas lights. And I have a good neighbor across the street—all my neighbors are good neighbors; I’m blessed. I have to be careful what I say now, but the neighbor directly across the street, John Falls—and we were talking about Christmas decorations. And their house is so beautifully decorated, and they were telling us about a particular house. And he said, “Now you need to go here,” and he begins to explain it to me. And it got kind of

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convoluted. John said, “Wait a minute, pastor. Just let me get in my car and I’ll take you there.” I said, “Sounds like a good deal to me.” So he got in his car and took me there. The only thing I had to worry about—I didn’t have to worry about a street name, a direction: north, south, east, or west—the only thing concerning me was his taillights—just his taillights! Oh, when he moved, I moved. And he said, “Just keep your eye on me,” and he took me right to where I needed to go.

Now this is what he’s talking about right now: “When the ark moves, you go after it.” Let Him guide you with His presence. Now, let me say three things about that.

A. You Don’t Have to Know When

Number one: You don’t have to know when. “Listen,” he says, “when the ark moves, then go after it.” Verse 3: *“When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.”* (Joshua 3:3) In plain English, “Don’t move till the ark moves.” With God, timing is far more important than time.

Have you ever gotten impatient with the Lord, wondering why God doesn’t move sooner? You can do the right thing in the wrong time. Moses was to deliver the children of Israel, and he couldn’t wait on God. He got out there ahead of time, tried to be a missionary, ended up being a murderer, killed an Egyptian, spent forty years on the back side of the desert going around in circles, because he could not wait on God. He moved before God moved.

Abraham—the same thing. Abraham was promised a son. Moses was promised he was going to deliver the children of Israel, but he couldn’t wait on God. Abraham was promised a son, and he couldn’t wait on God; so he had physical, sexual relations with his wife’s maid, Hagar, and brought forth a son, Ishmael. And today, the whole world is still in turmoil, because Abraham could not wait on God. And the sons of Ishmael and the sons of Isaac are at war today, and Abraham just thought he would hurry God up a little bit, and he made a mess out of it.

Let me tell you about Jesus. Jesus was never in a hurry, and Jesus was never late. And at the end of His ministry, He said, *“I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”* (John 17:4) Now a lot of people, I’m sure, were impatient with Jesus. They wanted to know: “Jesus, why aren’t you in a bigger rush than you’re in?” I mean, after all, Jesus spent thirty years in a carpenter’s shop. “Hey, if you’re the Messiah, why are you wasting thirty years?” You know what He said? They didn’t ask Him that direct question, but it’s implied. He said, *“Mine hour is not yet come”—“mine hour is not yet come.”* (John 2:4) He’s waiting on God.

When Lazarus was in the tomb, Mary and Martha said, “Jesus, come help. Lazarus is sick”—before he was in the tomb—“Lazarus is sick.” Jesus just delayed and waited

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until Lazarus was dead, and then He came and raised him. At first, they were pouting; secondly, they were praising, because the glory of the resurrection was greater than bringing Lazarus back to life, was greater than had Jesus come and touched him and healed him. What I'm trying to say is—listen to me, folks—let the Lord Jesus guide you with His presence. You don't have to know when.

B. You Don't Have to Know Where

Number two: You don't have to know where. Look in verse 4: *"for ye have not passed this way heretofore."* (Joshua 3:4) Friend, you don't have to know what God has planned for you this coming year. You don't have to know where you're going to end up. The only thing you have to do is to keep your eyes on the ark. As a matter of fact, I'm so glad God doesn't tell me the future. I'm so glad I don't know what's going to happen in my life this year. That would take the mystery out of it. It would take the romance out of it. It would take the mystique out of it. It would take the joy out of it, because I could not be surprised by God's serendipities. It may put a lot of dread into it if I knew that I was going to be in an automobile accident, or one of my grandchildren would die, or some disease would come. I would live every day dreading, waiting for it to come. Isn't God merciful that we don't know the future?

You see—look—we don't have to know when. Just: "When the ark moves, you move." (Joshua 3:3) We don't have to know where: "You've not come this way before" (Joshua 3:4)—"so, just keep your eye on me, because you've never been."

C. You Don't Have to Know Why

And you don't have to know why—you don't have to know why. *Why* is God's question. *How* is your answer: God. You don't have to understand. Listen. The Bible says in verse 5, *"To morrow the LORD will do wonders among you."* (Joshua 3:5) Well, what is a wonder? A wonder is something you don't understand. You see, we don't live by explanations; we live by promises.

Have you ever wanted God to explain things to you? Have you ever argued with God and said, "Lord, tell me why"? Well, number one: You couldn't understand if He told you, because He said, "My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8) Number two: If He did tell you, you'd say, "Now, Lord, here's a better way. You could do that." You'd try to explain it to God and try to bend God's will to fit your will. In my life, the only way I've known the plan of God is not to look into the future, but to look over my shoulder and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord led me."

When I was a teen, God called me to preach. How did God call me to preach? Well, that's the last thing I thought I would ever do: be a preacher. I had no notion that God would want me to preach the gospel. But when I got saved, I had a dear pastor who said, "God has a plan for everybody's life." I'll tell you, I wasn't the smartest thing that

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moved, but I did have enough sense to say this to the Lord: "Lord, whatever you want me to do, I want to do it"—"Whatever you want me to do, I want to do it." Somehow the germ got in my mind, my heart, that He might want me to preach. And then, that conviction got stronger and stronger. And I was at Ridgecrest, North Carolina, our Baptist Assembly, as a teen in high school, and a man preached about God's will for your life, and he said, "God is probably calling some of you to preach." I don't remember much about the sermon, but I do remember the invitational hymn, "Wherever He Leads, I'll Go"—"Wherever He Leads, I'll Go." And I said, "Lord, I know you want me to do this," and I stepped out. And I've never looked back on it from that time as a high school boy. God wanted me to preach.

I had a girl that I wanted to marry. That girl was there at that retreat with me. She's my grade-school sweetheart. And Joyce and I got married, and we didn't know—we had no idea—about Bellevue Baptist Church, or Memphis, Tennessee, or anything like that, or Love Worth Finding. But we knew the Lord. And at our wedding, we kneeled together and prayed, and had a soloist to sing,

O Jesus, [we] have promised to serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near [us], [our] Master and [our] Friend;
[We] shall not fear the battle if Thou art by [our] side,
Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be [our] Guide.
—JOHN E. BODE

And Joyce and I have seen God guide us.

God brought us here to Bellevue Baptist Church. We were at Merritt Island, Florida, one of the greatest churches in America, a loving people, a dear fellowship. They loved us, and we loved them. But the Ark of the Covenant just seemed to be moving over here, and Jesus pointed to Memphis. And we wanted to argue with the Lord, but we said, "Lord, whatever you want." But when we left Merritt Island—Merritt Island there on the coast of Florida—we drove over the bridge and looked back, and Joyce and I cried like babies leaving our church, our people that we loved. But all of my life I've been able to say, by God's grace—and I don't say it self-servingly or braggingly, but thankfully and gratefully—that you don't have to know when; you don't have to know where; you don't have to know why. Just keep your eye on the ark; and whenever it moves, just move.

Manley Beasley, who's preached from this pulpit, says, "Success is just finding out where God is moving, and just joining." That's all: just get in on what God is doing. That is success.

Now, what I'm trying to say is, first of all, let Jesus guide you with His presence. The one thing I want you, my dear precious people, to be certain of this coming year is that Jesus is a reality to you. Just as I did not want to lose the taillights of my neighbor, I just wanted to keep that in sight so I would arrive, you just make certain that Jesus is real to

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you. I'm not talking about the Jesus that Adrian preaches; the Jesus that you know is what I'm talking about. Now I want you to make certain—just make that your resolution this year—that "Jesus Christ will be real to me, and He will guide me. He will guide me with His presence. When the ark moves, I'll move."

II. Let Jesus Gladden You with His Promises

Here's the second thing—all right now, listen: Not only let Jesus guide you with His presence, but let Jesus gladden you with His promises. Now, look in verse 3: *"And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see"*—now here's the phrase—*"the ark of the covenant"—"the covenant."* (Joshua 3:3) What is a covenant? A covenant is a sacred contract. A covenant is a binding agreement. A covenant is an unfailing promise. God had made a covenant with His ancient people, and God has made a covenant with me and with you.

Several things I want you to see about the covenant, the promises of God.

A. The Promises of God Are for All Saints

First of all, they're for all saints. Look in verse 7: *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses,"*—listen to this—*"so I will be with thee."* (Joshua 3:7) Now the promises are for all saints. "Now, Joshua, I made some promises to Moses; but they're just as good for you. As I was with Moses, I'll be with you."

Now, what's the point? The promise did not die with Moses: Moses was dead. And the promises in the Bible did not die with the Bible saints. Do you know what some of us think? You think they were different than we are. For the Bible says Elijah was a man of like passions as we are. (James 5:17) Somehow we think they breathed different air. Somehow we think that God was more powerful or something in that day than in this day. Friend, the promises are for all saints.

One man picked up his wife's Bible and saw that she'd underlined a lot of passages but didn't seem to be putting them into practice. She was using them more as slogans than as promises. Do you do that? The man said to his wife, "Why do you call it shopping? You never buy anything." You know, women do what they call window-shopping. She said, "Why do you call it fishing? You never catch anything." Some people just sort of window-shop through the Bible. Do you ever window-shop through the Bible? "Oh, what a precious promise!" "Oh, that's a lovely one!"

B. The Promises of God Are for All Seasons

Listen, friends. These promises are for you. They're for all saints. And they're for all seasons. "As I was with Moses, I'll be with you." (Joshua 3:7) And two thousand years has not eroded the promises away. Don't you let them keep you from a promise.

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C. The Promises of God Are for All Situations

And they're for all situations. Now here's the interesting thing. Moses had failed. Now, is Joshua going to say, "Because Moses failed, and Moses died on Mount Nebo, and Moses didn't get to lead the children of Israel in, then I guess I'm going to have to fail, too"? No! If there are others that do not believe the promises of God, that's no reason that you should not.

Friend, listen. Let Him guide you with His promises. They're for all saints. They're for all seasons. They're for all situations. The main thing again: What you have to do is to understand that He's made a promise to you—a covenant. "Well," you say, "that was the covenant to Israel." Yes, He's given us a new covenant, a new covenant in His blood, which the book of Hebrews says is a better covenant. (Hebrews 12:24) And listen to Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2—listen to it. We are to be *"looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* (Hebrews 12:2) Just as they were looking to the ark, we are to be looking to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, notice: not looking *at* Jesus, *"looking unto Jesus."* What does it mean to look *unto* someone—to look *unto* Jesus? Well, suppose Mark here is a very wealthy man, and suppose I'm a beggar; and I've got some real problems, and I say, "Mark, I'm in serious difficulty." And Mark says, "Pastor, look to me: I'll take care of it. Look to me." He doesn't mean, "Look at me." He means, "Depend upon me." That's what the Bible means when it says "looking unto Jesus." (Hebrews 12:2) It doesn't mean "looking at Jesus"; it means "depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a word that means "to look away from everything else"—*aphoraó*—looking away from these two guys and looking to this man. It means "turning away from one thing to look at another." That's the way I am to live with my covenant-keeping God.

1. Don't Look at the Devil

Now the devil will try to keep you this coming year from looking to everything else but the promises of God. Some look at Satan. They're trying to find a demon under every bush, and they're all terrified. Satan will come to either terrify or entice. Don't get devil-conscious; be Jesus-conscious.

2. Don't Look at Circumstances

Don't look at circumstances. You look at circumstances, you're going to go down. Simon Peter got out of the boat to walk on water, and he was doing just fine as long as he was what? Looking to Jesus. But then he looked at those mountainous waves, and when he saw the waves, that they were boisterous, he took his eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ and put his eyes on circumstances—and he began to sink.

3. Don't Look at Other Saints

Don't look at other saints. Has somebody disappointed you? Not yet? Well, just wait.

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And the best of people will disappoint you. The Bible says—I think about the middle verse in the Bible—*"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."* (Psalm 118:8) Listen. Don't put your confidence in any man. "Well, didn't Paul say, 'You follow me as I follow Christ'?" (1 Corinthians 11:1) He wasn't saying, "Follow me." He said, "Like I follow Christ, you follow Christ"—that's what he meant: "You follow me; as I follow Christ, you follow Christ." You are to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Don't Look at Your Own Faith

Don't look at other people. And don't even look at your faith. You know how dirty the devil is? The devil will say, "Yes, sure you're justified, and saved, and kept by faith; but your faith is so weak. You haven't got good faith." And that will sometimes mess you up. I've learned how to use that against the devil. The devil says to me, "Adrian, your faith is no good." I say, "Well, so what? I'm not putting faith in faith; I'm putting faith in Jesus. Who cares about my faith?" Isn't Jesus wonderful? He doesn't know how to handle that. Friend, don't look at your faith; look to Jesus. He is your ark.

III. Let Jesus Guard You with His Power

As you go into this new year—listen—let Him guide you with His presence. Let Him gladden you with His promise. He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* (Hebrews 12:2) What a wonderful thing that is! Now here's a third thing I want you to do: Let Jesus not only guide you with His presence; not only let Him gladden you with His promise; but let the Lord Jesus guard you with His power.

Notice, beginning in verse 7: *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan,"*—now Jordan is that river that separated them from the land of promise—*"ye shall stand still in Jordan. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. And Joshua said, Hereby shall ye know"*—now, watch this—*"that the living God…"*—oh, I love that phrase—*"the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites"*—you expect him to say "and the termites." *"Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan."* (Joshua 3:7–11)

You know why we don't obey the Lord sometimes? Because we don't trust. And you know why we don't trust is, dear friend, we do not know how great our God is. Knowledge of God equals trust. And trust equals obedience. And obedience equals blessing.

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Now, let's just tear this verse apart a little bit and look at it and find out who the God of our great power is.

A. He Is the Lord God

Notice He is the Lord God. In Joshua 3:9, he speaks: *"And hear the words of the LORD your God."* (Joshua 3:9) Is He your Lord? This coming year, is He your sovereign? Are you willing to follow Him? You see, listen. He is the Lord your God; and if He commands you to cross Jordan, it's His business to take Jordan out of the way. Now He is the Lord. I mean, He's the One who created Jordan; He's the One who created you. And don't parade the commands of God past the judgment bar of your understanding as to whether or not it's possible or not. *"With God all things are possible."* (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27)

B. He Is the Living God

He's the Lord God. He is the living God. Look in verse 10: *"And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you."* (Joshua 3:10) He is totally sufficient. He is not dead. He is not sick. And every demand upon you is a demand upon the God who lives in you. I'm telling you that God is alive and well and living in you if you're saved.

I read somewhere there are 14.7 pounds of pressure on every square inch of your body. Add that up, and it means that there are tons of weight that are pressing down upon you right now—tons! Well, why aren't you crushed? Because you have pressure on the inside that keeps you from being crushed. Now there's enormous pressure from this world; but thank God we have Jesus on the inside, don't we? We have the Lord Jesus. He is the living God, and He lives in us.

C. He Is the Liberating God

And not only is He the Lord God; not only is He the living God; but He is the liberating God. Now here's the point. Watch this; begin in verse 11 now: *"Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man."* Now, watch this; don't miss it: *"And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap."* (Joshua 3:11–13)

All right, here's Joshua. Now He says, "Look, I'm the Lord God. I'm the living God. I'm the liberating God. You keep your eye on the ark! Priests, take that ark and go into the river Jordan." As soon as the feet of those priests touched that river Jordan, something happened. The waters began to back up, and they backed up; and this chapter tells us they backed up all the way to the city of Adam. I don't think that is put

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there by happenstance: all the way back to the city of Adam—just piling up in a heap. And here are these priests: as soon as they begin to obey—the waters don't stop until they obey, but when they get in, the waters just back up. And they come in here with the Ark of the Covenant right in the middle of Jordan.

You know what *Jordan* means? The word *Jordan* means "descent." The word *dan*—*Jor-dan*—means "judgment." It is descent into judgment. The river Jordan is the river of death flowing down to the Dead Sea. Now the Ark of the Covenant comes into the river of death and stops; and the waters stop all the way back to Adam. And the children of Israel just come on through.

Friend, Jesus entered the chilly waters of the river of death and is our victory. And He stopped death all the way back to Adam: *"In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"* (1 Corinthians 15:22)—to let the people of God go through. And there is our Lord. There is our cross. There is our Savior. There is the Ark of the Covenant. There is our mighty God, the Lord God, the living God, the liberating God, to let the people go through. What a mighty God we serve! What a mighty God we serve!

All the way my Savior leads me;
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.
—Fanny Crosby

Conclusion

This coming year, you let the Lord Jesus Christ guide you with His presence. Let Him gladden you with His promises. Let Him guard you with His power, because He is a mighty God. You don't have to know when. You don't have to know where. You don't have to know why if you know Jesus. Just know Jesus. Do you know Him? Don't enter a new year without Him. Don't even leave home without Him.

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The Triumph of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 7, 1977 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 5:13-15

"And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?"
JOSHUA 5:14

Outline

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Introduction

Turn to the book of Joshua, would you, please. Now, Joshua is the book of victory. And it's the Old Testament book that describes the New Testament victory that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, for Joshua is a picture, a type, and an illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the name in the Old Testament, Joshua, is the Hebrew name of our New Testament name Jesus. It's very interesting, isn't it? That Joshua represents and pictures the victory that Jesus can give us. The Lord Jesus is our heavenly Joshua who leads us into the land of promise, the land of fulfillment, the land of victory.

And didn't God give us a victory last Sunday? Now we praise God for Miracle Day and so many miracles that happened in so many ways. There were miracles of attendance. Some did not know what our attendance was last Sunday. We just praise the Lord. We'd asked the Lord to give us 4,300 in Bible study by classes and departments, and we had over 4,400—and I just thank God for that. It's a wonderful victory.

You know, it was raining all around the city, except in midtown. I don't know whether

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the Lord did that just for us or not, but I sure did appreciate it that it wasn't raining right here on this building while we were having these services, so folks could get in and out. And, you know, I found out that part of the schools were out on the Friday before—miracle! And some of them were out on the Monday after. Had we known that ahead of time, we never would have planned it on that day. But God did it—you did it—anyway. And there were miracles of physical healing, and, oh, the great miracles of many precious souls coming to Jesus. And how we thank God for the victory that our Lord has given us!

Now, today, we want to speak to you on "The Triumph of Faith"—"The Triumph of Faith." And turn to Joshua chapter 5, beginning in verse 13—Joshua chapter 5, beginning in verse 13. Now, remember the children of Israel have crossed the river Jordan. God performed the miracle, as we saw last Sunday, to get them through Jordan. They're getting ready to possess their possessions, to take the land. And so we begin reading in verse 13: *"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."* (Joshua 5:13–15)

Now, Joshua is out to look over Jericho, because Jericho is a very formidable city, a great citadel fortress that stood before the children of Israel and the land of promise. It was a great city, great in antiquity, one of the oldest known inhabited cities on the face of the earth. But not only was it great in antiquity; it was great in iniquity—a wicked, godless, sensual city. But it was also great in fortification—great walls that chariots could ride abreast were encircling the city.

It was in the eyes of men, and by military strategy, an impregnable fortress. And it like looked there was no way that Israel could take Jericho. And I want to say, in each of our lives the devil has placed a very special Jericho, and it looms before us as an impossible barrier that stands between us and the fulfillment that we feel that God wants for us in this life. There's a Jericho that stands between us and the dreams of our youth. There's a Jericho that stands before us, and between us and the will of God for our lives. It seems as though there seems to be a Jericho that stands between us and the very best ambition of our hearts. And there it stands, and there it shouts its defiance. And that Jericho says to us, "You would have made it had it not been for me. But I'm here, and all of my strength, to keep you from entering into that land of promise."

You know what your Jericho is? For some of you, it may be an unhealthy body. For

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others, it may be an unhappy marriage. For others, it may be an unholy life. For some, it may be old age. For some, a lack of education. For some, past defeats. For some, fear. There just seems to be something in our lives insurmountable, something that we cannot overcome, some fortress that seems to keep us from conquering the land that our God has given us. And when you face your Jericho, you can do one of two things: you can turn around and go back and die in the wilderness of unbelief; or else you can do as Joshua did, and you can face that fortress by faith, and conquer it.

I want you to turn in the New Testament to Hebrews chapter 11, and I want you to see the New Testament interpretation. For you see, ladies and gentlemen, the Bible says that what happened in the book of Joshua was not mere history. The Bible says *"these things happened unto them for examples"* (1 Corinthians 10:11) to us. That is, the Old Testament stories are illustrations of New Testament victory. In Hebrews chapter 11, verse 30, we read these words: *"By faith…"*—underscore that—*"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."* (Hebrews 11:30)

What was the victory of Jericho? It was a victory of faith. And that's the reason we're speaking to you today on the triumph of faith. It is faith, ladies and gentlemen—nothing more, nothing less—that will achieve the victory in our lives. Here is the lesson in all of the book of Joshua. Do you want to learn the lesson today? Do you want me to give you Joshua in a sentence? Victory is not achieved by fighting; it is received by faith. Learn that. That's the lesson. Victory is not achieved by fighting. Victory is received by faith.

You see, when God has a gigantic task that He wants performed, He gives faith the contract. Faith is very wonderful, because it is faith, ladies and gentlemen, that links our nothingness to God's Almightiness. And that makes the difference.

I. The Captain of Our Faith

I want us to notice several things here in our study, this morning. The first thing I want us to notice is the captain of our faith—the captain of our faith. Do you remember we read in Joshua chapter 5, beginning in verse 13, that Joshua is out looking at Jericho? He's summing up his problems; he is on a reconnaissance trip; and he's measuring the city. There it is; there the great walls—it just can't be done!

Say, when's the last time you've been out to have a look at your problems? You say, "Just about five minutes ago, Brother Rogers." Oh, you've been out walking around, and you're saying, "Oh, there's my Jericho—it looms so big, so great, in front of me." That's just what Joshua was doing when suddenly he was aware that there was another presence there.

Have you ever been somewhere and just suddenly you felt that someone was standing near you? Joshua wheels around and he sees a man with a drawn sword in

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his hand. Joshua slaps his side where his sword would be and starts to pull his sword from the scabbard, and Joshua asked the question that we would ask under such circumstances: "Are you a friend or are you a foe?" "Are you for us or are you for them?" Look at it here in the Scripture and see the question, because it's a very important question.

The Bible says in the last part of verse 13 that *"Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"* (Joshua 5:13) "Say, fellow," he says, "whose side are you on?" And I want you to notice the strange answer that he gets. He says, "Are you for us or for them?" And the answer is *no*. "Are you for us? Are you for them?" And the answer is *no*. Look at it: *"And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come."* (Joshua 5:14) He is saying, "I'm not for you, and I'm not for them. I haven't come to take sides; I've come to take over." Oh, listen. He had a face-to-face confrontation with the Lord Jesus Christ. This was Jesus that he met—in the Old Testament, what we would call a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus. He, the Lord Jesus, is the captain of all of the host of heaven, and Joshua had a preview of the coming of Christ. He saw the man, the conqueror, with the drawn sword who's not come to take sides: the One who's come to take over.

Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, *if you want victory in your life, stop trying to get God on your side. Get on God's side—get on God's side. God hasn't come to take sides; He's come to take over.* And you will never know faith, you will never know victory, and your Jericho will never fall, until you do as Joshua did. You lay your sword at His feet and bow yourself prostrate at His feet and worship Him. And when you do that, ladies and gentlemen, Jericho is no longer your problem. It becomes God's problem. And that makes the difference when you can turn that Jericho over to the One who has come to take over.

You see, Joshua had been problem-conscious; and now, no longer is he problem-conscious—he is God conscious. He lies in the dust before the Lord. And he's not thinking now of why it can't be done. He knows that it must be done. It will be done.

You know, there are lots of folks who are problem-conscious. I mean, all they do is walk around and look at Jericho and say, "Can't be done—can't be done—can't be done." I heard of one man who'd never seen a railroad train, back in the days when trains were just coming into their own. And he went to a little county seat town, and there was his first railroad train, a steam locomotive—he saw it. That big iron engine, that string of freight cars—he looked at it; he surveyed it. He was a cynic; he was negative; he said, "It will never move; they'll never get that thing going." But, finally, the engineer sitting there in the cab started to push the lever, and the steam went down into the cylinders. And the cylinders began to move, and they began to move the wheels, and the wheels started to move, and they caught hold. And that train started to move

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slowly at first, and then it gathered speed, *clickety-clack*, *clickety-clack*. And the first thing you know, it was moving down the road, and those freight cars were shooting past him, and it disappeared into distance. And all he could see was the tail light on the caboose. He stood there and looked at it. He said, "They'll never get that blamed thing stopped."

Now, you know, there are people who are that way. They are just negative. They just see the problem, but they don't see the victory. Now, ladies and gentlemen, it is time that we stopped looking so much at Jericho and started looking at Jesus, isn't it? See, there's the captain—He's the captain of our faith; He, the Lord Jesus, is captain of our faith. And so, if you want to have faith and if you want your Jericho to fall, you need to be God-conscious and not problem-conscious. You glance at your problems, and you gaze at the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Joshua laid his sword at the feet of Jesus.

I want to tell you something. Are you listening? You want to be a conqueror? You want to be victorious like Joshua was? Before you can be a conqueror, you must first be conquered. That's what happened to Joshua. That's what this is all about. Joshua, who was the captain, became the servant. And there was a new Commander-in-Chief that took over that day. Has that happened to you? Have you bowed your head before the Lord and worshipped Him? Have you given everything to Jesus Christ? I mean, everything? If you haven't, no wonder Jericho is still there. Learn the lesson in the last part of chapter 5: The captain of our faith is Jesus.

II. The Compliance of Our Faith

Now, the next thing I want you to notice is the compliance of our faith. Once Joshua met the captain of the host, He gave him some instructions. Begin reading in chapter 6, verse 1: *"Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in."* That is, they had shut the great doors that went around that city, and nobody could get out, and nobody could get in. *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him."* (Joshua 6:1–5)

This is what I call the compliance of faith—the compliance of faith, because God now gives Joshua some instructions, and Joshua complies with those instructions. What strange instructions they were! My soul! It doesn't sound like a military strategy to me.

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God doesn't tell Joshua to build any catapults. He doesn't tell Joshua to gather any battering rams. He doesn't instruct Joshua to dig any trenches. He doesn't tell him to get any ladders to storm the wall. He tells him to do something that sounds very silly: start marching around the wall—round and round them, round and round the walls.

Now, everybody knows that won't work. Only trouble is, it did, amen? Everybody knows that won't work. You just can't take a city that way.

Why did God tell Joshua to do this? Well, I don't know all of the reasons, but I believe I know two.

1. To Test Joshua's Obedience

Number one, just to test his obedience—just to test his obedience. You see, it doesn't have to make sense to you, so long as it makes sense to God. Why do something? If God says to, that's enough, amen? It doesn't have to make sense to us. You see, it's not our job to understand; it's our job to undertake, just to obey the Bible.

You know the problem with so many people? They're trying to understand the Bible without obeying the Bible. Let me tell you how to understand this book. You want to understand this book? You start obeying this book, and you'll understand it. But as long as you don't obey it, you'll not understand it. *The Bible is not first and foremost a book to be explained. It is first and foremost a book to be obeyed.* And the reason that some cannot explain it is they're unwilling to obey it, and they're trying to sit around and figure it out. Dear friend, it's not up to you to figure out why God may tell you to march around your Jericho or whatever God may tell you to do.

And I'm sure it was ridiculous in the eyes of the people of Jericho. They're up there on the walls—this is a little *Adrianology*; I don't know it happened this way—but they're up there on the walls, certainly bound to have looked at those people: "And would you look at that! Look at them! There they go. That's the stupidest thing I ever heard of. Hey, fellow, what are you doing?" Well, they couldn't say a word, for God said, "You keep silent." "What are you doing down there?" "What's the matter: the cat got your tongue?" Ring around the rosies. "What are you doing, stupid?" They just kept marching.

Did you know that the world can't understand us? The Bible says, *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* (1 Corinthians 1:18) Do you know where I believe that the great onslaught on the church is going to be in the last days? In the media, and especially in Hollywood and television, they're going to take great delight at making fun of the people of God. And what the devil has not been able to do in any other way, he's going to try to stop the Church of the living God by sheer ridicule. And you can get ready for Bible-believing, fundamental Christians to be the brunt of the wickedest, most vile and lascivious insinuations and jokes that the world has ever known. And it's already happening—it's already happening. Get ready for it.

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And I wonder if you're going to let the jeers of Jericho keep you from obeying the Word of God, if you're going to let the devil take you away from a victory. There are some people who can stand almost anything but to be laughed at. The time is coming, dear friend, when the world is going to try to make us look like fools. And we may indeed look like fools—sometimes in their sight, sometimes in our sight. But it's up to us to obey the Word. And if we're fools, we'll be fools for Christ's sake. For God does not have to justify His commands to anybody.

God says, "Joshua, you march around the walls." Understand it or not, this is the way it's going to be done. And don't depend upon your feelings.

For feelings come, and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God—
Naught else is worth believing.
—MARTIN LUTHER

And so, what is our job? The compliance of faith is full, prompt, glad, unreserved, and unquestioned obedience.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.
—JOHN H. SAMMIS

The captain of our faith is Jesus. The compliance of our faith is obedience.

2. To Test Israel's Observation

And now I want to tell you another reason I believe—and we're still talking about the compliance of faith: Not only did God have them march around the city to test their obedience, but also for their observation—to let them see certain things. Every time they walked around that city, it seemed to get bigger in their minds. There was that great towering city, those walls of strength. And every time they looked at it, they saw what an impossibility it was. Did you know that God is keeping your problem before you until He brings you to the place where you say, "I can't solve it"? You want to know why it hasn't been solved yet? Because you haven't come to that place, perhaps, of utter desperation, where you say, "God, I can't."

I like what Ian Thomas had to say. He said we ought to say, "God, I can't: you never said I could. You can: you always said you would." Oh, when we come to that place, when we understand that the Christian life is not hard—with man, it's impossible; only God can do it—and when we quit crying and start trusting; when we walk around our Jericho long enough to bow our heads in desperation and say, "God, I can't; if it's done, O God, the Captain of the host will have to do it," then He'll take over.

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III. The Continuance of Our Faith

All right now, the third thing I want us to see: Not only the captain of our faith, who is Jesus; the compliance of our faith, which must be obedience, for *"faith without works is dead"*; (James 2:20) but the continuance of our faith. I want you to notice in verses 13 through 15 now of Joshua chapter 6: *"And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually,"*—just underscore that—*"and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rearward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on,"*—I like that—*"and blowing with the trumpets. And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times."* (Joshua 6:13–15) They continued—they continued! What a test of their faith it was! I mean, to them it looked like all they were doing was going around in circles.

Why didn't God do something? Why do we have to go around seven times? Why not one time? Why any time? But God was teaching them another lesson: that waiting time is not wasted time. To wait on the Lord is one of the grandest lessons that anybody can learn. You see, God is never in a hurry. Now, we are. We've heard about the man who prayed, "Lord, give me patience—right now!" And we get upset if we miss one section in a revolving door. But we want everything: instant pleasure, instant coffee, instant gratification: "Do it now, God!" But God is never in a hurry. But I'll tell you something else about God: He's never late—He's never late! God knows what He's doing, and God didn't get frantic. But these people—and I'm glad that they did—they kept on keeping on. For the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 28 and verse 16, *"He that believeth shall not make haste."* (Isaiah 28:16) That's a great verse.

Let me give you another great verse while we're in Isaiah. Look in Isaiah chapter 30 and verse 18—oh, you ought to put a star by this one: *"And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you."* (Isaiah 30:18) *"Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."* (John 11:21) But Jesus tarried on purpose. Jesus waited on purpose. Jesus had a greater plan than they could imagine. Jesus was going to raise him from the dead. *"And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him."* (Isaiah 30:18) Isn't that a good verse? Say, isn't that a good verse? *"Therefore will the Lord wait,"*—why?—*"that he may be gracious unto you."* You see, God's delays are not denials. *"Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious to you"*—why?—*"…therefore will He be exalted"*—because He has a plan that is beyond your plan, and God is going to give glory to Himself, that He may have mercy upon you, for the Lord is

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a God of judgment.

You see, His thoughts are not your thoughts, (Isaiah 55:8) and neither are His times your times. The Lord knows what He's doing. He's a God of judgment. *"Blessed are all they that wait for him."* God is waiting for you to wait for Him. *"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."* (Isaiah 40:31) The continuance of faith.

You know the problem with some of you? You've been around your Jericho six times, and you're about to quit; you're about to back off. You say, "Where is all this that the pastor is talking about? Where's all this victory? He says, 'If I'll trust the Lord, He'll give me victory,' and I don't have any victory." Wait upon the Lord. Rest in the Lord. *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."* (Galatians 6:9)

I'll give another great verse—Hebrews chapter 10, verse 36—listen to it: *"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."* (Hebrews 10:36) Isn't that great? *"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."* We have so many who quit just before the victory comes. They run off; they go back into the wilderness. We've got a lot of Alka-Seltzer Christians: you dip them in water, they fizzle for a while and disappear. The only difference is they give you headaches. They don't stick it out. They don't stay with it. They have not learned to wait upon the Lord. I'm so glad that they completed every circuit.

God told Naaman to dip in the river Jordan and he'd be made whole of his leprosy. One dip, leprosy; two dips, leprosy; three dips, leprosy; four, five, six dips, and he still had leprosy. But the seventh dip, he had victory, amen? Victory! Why obedience? The continuance of faith.

Have faith in God, He's on His throne;
Have faith in God, He watches o'er His own.
He cannot fail, He must prevail;
Have faith in God, have faith in God.
—B. B. McKinney

I want to let go, but I won't let go.
There are battles to fight,
By day and night,
For God and the right—
And I'll never let go.

I want to let go, but I won't let go.

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I'm sick, 'tis true,
Worried and blue,
And worn through and through,
But I won't let go.

I want to let go, but I won't let go.
I will never yield!
What! Lie down on the field
And surrender my shield?
No, I'll never let go!

I want to let go, but I won't let go.
May this be my song:
"Mid legions of wrong—
Oh, God, keep me strong
That I may never let go!"
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

The continuance of faith—the continuance of faith.

IV. The Confession of Faith

Now I want you to notice a next thing: I want you to notice the confession of faith. Begin reading here in verse 15—Joshua chapter 6, verse 15: *"And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times"—"only on that day they compassed the city seven times." "And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city."* (Joshua 6:15–16) And they shouted, and the walls came down.

What was this shout? Oh, friend, if you read it and don't see it, I don't understand why you don't see it. This was the shout of victory. But it was the shout of victory before the victory came. Oh, it was the shout of victory, so that the victory that had been promised would be there. It was a confession of faith that God would keep His word.

You see, confession is but faith turned inside out. Joshua knew the whole time they were marching around the city that their march was nothing but a victory that was taking place before the victory ever got there, because God had already given them the victory. You see, Joshua was one of a small minority of people who refused to live dominated by the tyranny of the five senses. Sight and hearing and smelling and

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touching and tasting: he refused that. He was a man who marched to the beat of a different drummer. He was a man whose authority was not what his senses told him, but what his God had told him. And he says, "God hath given the city." And the walls were still there just as strong as they ever were. And Joshua didn't say, "The Lord will give you the city." He said, "God has given you the city." Now, that's poor English, but mighty good faith, amen?

Now, why did he say that? I mean, the walls are still there. Nothing has happened. And he told them to shout the victory before the victory, that the victory would be real. There's where faith comes: it's a confession of faith.

Let me show you why Joshua said what he said. He wasn't being presumptuous. He says in verse 16, *"Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city."* (Joshua 6:16) All right, go back and look at verse 2: *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho."* (Joshua 6:2) Now, why could Joshua say that? Well, he could say it because God had already said it, amen? You see, listen. You want me to tell you what faith is? Faith is just you saying what God has already said. That's all it is. It is just you confessing what God has already said.

Now I want you to go back to Hebrews. We've spent a little time in Hebrews, so I want you to look at a great, great verse in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 5—Hebrews 13 and verse 5—and you'll learn right now one of the greatest spiritual principles in all of the Bible. This will keep you going when nothing else will. Hebrews chapter 13, beginning in verse 5: *"Let your conversation…"*—that means "manner of living"—*"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"*—*"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* Now, just underscore this phrase *"he hath said."* Just mark it; just put a line under it: *"he hath said."* Now, go down to verse 6: *"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper."* (Hebrews 13:5–6)

Now, let me just talk. Take a part out of each of those verses: *"He hath said…so that we may boldly say."* Do you see it? Do you see it? That's what faith is. *Faith is boldly saying what God has already said. "He hath said…so that we may boldly say."*

Now, friend, if God had told Joshua He had given him the city, then Joshua could say, "The city is ours," couldn't he? You see, that's faith; that's a confession of faith; that's when faith becomes real to you. Friend, ladies and gentlemen, listen to me. It is confession that brings possession. When you say it, God ratifies it, because He's already said it. Confession is faith turned inside out. That's the reason the Bible says, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* (Romans 10:9–10)

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There are some of you who have been haunted by the ghost of guilt. But once you say, "God said that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin," and I say, "Praise God, hallelujah, on the authority of the Word of God, my sin is forgiven," that Jericho of guilt will fall—when you begin to confess by faith and say with God what God has already said.

Sometimes we get a person at the altar, trying to get him saved, and we say, "Why don't you pray and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come into your heart?" And he prays and says, "Lord God, come in my heart; forgive my sins." And we say, "Did God save you?" He says, "Well, I don't know whether He did or not. I don't guess He did." Well, I can tell you, friend, He didn't. You get somebody else to come down there, and you ask him to pray and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and he prays and says, "Lord God, I open my heart; I receive you as my Lord and Savior." And then, we ask him, "Did He save you?" And he says, "Yes, praise God, He did!" "How do you know He did?" "Well, He said He would, and He did." And I say, "That's right: He did." Amen? Whatever you say about it, God will say, too.

Faith is just simply ratifying the Word of God. *"He hath said…that we may boldly say."* Well, you say, "I don't dare say that." Why not? God said it. Why can't you say what God says? Why can't you say, *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"*? (Isaiah 1:18) And you can take this principle and apply it to any promise in the Word of God that applies to you. *"He hath said…that we may boldly say."* There is the confession of faith.

V. The Conquest of Faith

Now I want you to notice the conquest of faith—the conquest of faith. I want you to go back to Joshua chapter 6 again and notice what happened—verse 20: *"So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."* (Joshua 6:20)

Now, that's one part of the conquest of faith: victory—victory in Jesus, hallelujah! Your Jericho will fall if you will follow God's formula, if you'll let the Captain of the host of the heavens take over. Opposition will crumble, and enemies will be vanquished—glory to God for the victory! And *every* Christian *ought to be living on the* sunny side *of* Hallelujah Avenue *where* Glory Road *intersects*. You ought to be shouting the victory, praising the Lord, day by day. *"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."* (2 Corinthians 2:14)

And, oh, this doesn't mean that you're going to have no more problems. Why, Joshua went from this battle to another battle, and from that battle to another battle. And

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the victorious life *is not* freedom *from* battles*; it's freedom in battle*. We don't fight *for* victory; we fight *from* victory.

From victory unto victory
His army he shall lead,
Till every foe is vanquished,
And Christ is Lord indeed.
—GEORGE DUFFIELD, JR.

Oh, there's the conquest, but I want you to notice the dark side of this conquest. Look again, if you will, in verse 21: *"And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword."* (Joshua 6:21)

You say, "My soul, Brother Rogers, why—why?" The way the Canaanites were living, they were unspeakably immoral. They were living in the grossest of sexual sin. They had gone into the occult. They were worshipping demon gods. They had all kinds of sexual perversion. They were even sacrificing and putting to death their little babies. Why, they were so bad, they were so evil, they were almost as wicked as modern-day America, but not quite. Not quite, because they did not have the light that our city had had. And, oh, it makes me shudder as I think of the murder of millions of little unborn babies, as I think of how pornography is in the city of Memphis, as I think of how blasphemy, with George Burns playing the part of God in a movie—the blasphemy, the blasphemy, the blasphemy of it! I think of this.

I think of homosexuality that's brazen, *and sin that used to slink down the back alley now struts down Main Street.* I want to tell you something, friend: There's a dark side here. You need to understand something about God. God will bless the faithful. But God is a God of judgment. And you can let the Hollywood stars get on their late night talk shows, and laugh and mock and make fun of God's people, and all of the rest of it. And they can talk from the walls, but one of these days those man-made walls are going to crumble at the judgment of God.

Conclusion

And I want to tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: There's coming another day when another trumpet shall sound. There's coming another day when another shout shall shake not only the earth but the heavens also. And the Lord of lords and the King of kings, the man with the drawn sword, the Captain of the host of heaven, Jesus, is coming again. There's the conquest of faith—yes, there is. And I want to say that unless America has a revival, we're in for some dark days. And even now the raging waters of God's wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of His mercy, and one day, mercy will give place to wrath. God had patience with Jericho and with the Amorites. He said in

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the Bible, *"The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."* (Genesis 15:16) But one day, the cup of iniquity would fill to the brim, and God sent judgment.

Are you ready? Have you bowed before the man with the drawn sword? Have you taken off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground? Have you laid your sword in the dust of His feet? If you have, if you will, I can promise you that your Jericho will fall—when you begin to shout the victory, when you begin to say, *"He hath said…that we may boldly say."* Are you ready to trust Him today? Are you ready to receive Him as your Lord and Savior? He died on the cross to pay for your sins, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you will repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, God will forgive your sins, come into your heart, make you a new creature, and one day take you to heaven. I promise it on the authority of the Word of God.

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The Key to Unbroken Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 28, 1997 Time: 00AM

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 7

"And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee,
glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him;
and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."
JOSHUA 7:19

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Introduction

Would you take God's Word this morning and turn to Joshua chapter 7, and when you've found it, look up here and let me tell you something about you: God has planned, God has programmed, for you a life of victory—unbroken victory. However, many Christians are not living in unbroken victory. Many Christians are saved, but they're being defeated day by day. They have a saved soul and a lost life. I want to talk to you today about "The Key to Unbroken Victory."

Now, the Bible always admits the possibility of defeat, but the Bible never teaches

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the necessity of it. To the contrary, the Bible says, *"Thanks be unto God, which always"*—always, always—*"causeth us to triumph in Christ."* (2 Corinthians 2:14) Read with me Joshua chapter 7, beginning in verse 1. Now, this chapter takes place right after the defeat of mighty Jericho. You remember the story—the children of Israel marched around the city of Jericho for seven days. On the seventh day, seven times, they gave a shout, and the walls came tumbling down. They have come into the land, the Promised Land, to conquer it, and they have won a mighty, mighty, mighty victory.

Now, this episode begins with a conjunction in the negative: *"But"—"but"—"the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few"*—it's a small city, Ai, and small name, small city. *"So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men:"*—now, watch this—*"and they fled before the men of Ai."* (Joshua 7:1–4) They had conquered mighty Jericho, and now this insignificant little city sends them running like whipped puppies. They had failed.

Now, why had they failed? Why was Israel defeated? What is the key to constant and perpetual victory? How did they miss it? What happened? Well, use your imagination. I can imagine a scene like this: It's midnight now; over the ruins of Jericho, the city lies in rubble. There are broken columns and crumbled walls—disarray. Outside Jericho, the camp of Israel is pitched. And here is each tribe in its place, and the tents are there. The moon is looking down on that scene of desolation as the walls came tumbling down. Everybody is asleep. It's quiet. Did I say everybody was asleep? There's one man who's not asleep. He's a man whose name is Achan.

I see him as he comes to the door of his tent and opens it, and quietly, stealthily makes his way from that tent and out of the place where his tribe is encamped. He makes his way over those fallen bricks and rocks, over that fallen wall. He makes his way into the city there into the marketplace and he begins to look around. And the moonlight shines down on something that is silvery, and he notices that there's a bag there, and the mouth of that bag is open. He picks up the bag and looks, and there are two hundred—two hundred—shekels of silver. He's a soldier—he's never held that much money in his hand in one time. He picks it up, and it runs through his fingers like water. He puts it back in the bag and holds it in his trembling hand, and there he sees something flashing like fire. Is it a piece of cheese? No! It's a wedge of gold—pure gold!

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He picks it up and holds it. He's never seen that much gold at one time. He's got the silver; he's got the gold. And then, there's something else flashing, sparkling: it's an ornament—a beautiful ornament. It's on a garment. He picks it up, shakes the dust off it: "Why, that came from Babylon! Why, that's beautiful!" He holds it up. His heart is beating wildly. He says, "This I want; this I will have."

And he takes the silver and the gold, wraps it up in the Babylonian garment, makes his way back over the rubble back to his tent, looks around—nobody has seen him yet, he thinks. He goes into his tent and rolls back his sleeping mat and scoops out the dirt. And he puts the Babylonian garment in there, and he puts the two hundred shekels of silver. And he puts the wedge of gold and he covers it, then rolls out his sleeping mat and lies down and goes to sleep—at least he tries to sleep. There's a smile on his face. He says, "I have done it, and nobody has seen me."

And he was right—almost. There was one who had seen the whole thing: Almighty God, watching from heaven. What had he done? He had committed a trespass—and a terrible trespass. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, after all, it was a victory, and to the victor go the spoils." That's right: it was God's victory, and to God were to go the spoils. Go back and look, if you will, in chapter 6, verses 18 and 19—and God gave command concerning Jericho, and He said this: *"And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."* (Joshua 6:18–19) Now, this belonged to God, and what Achan had done was taken that which belonged to God: he took it unto himself, and he brought to himself a curse. And now, Israel, that was to have gone from victory to victory to victory, is defeated.

Now I want us to look at that passage, and I want us to apply this Old Testament passage to our hearts as we live in this day and in this age. I want to give you four principles, and I pray God that He will etch these upon your consciousness today and help you to remember them if you want to live in unbroken victory.

I. Great Victories Are Often Followed by Great Defeats

The very first thing, the very first principle, I want to lay on your heart is this: that great victories may be and are often followed by great defeats—great victories are often followed by great defeats.

Now, what caused this defeat? Well, there were two that sinned that day—two categories: There was Israel itself. And then, there was this man in specificity, whose name was Achan.

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A. Israel's Sin: Carelessness

Now, what caused Israel's sin? Well, look, if you will, in this passage of Scripture, and you're going to find out that Israel's sin was carelessness—are you listening?—just sheer carelessness. Now, how was their carelessness shown?

1. Pride

Well, first of all, when they went out to conquer and they looked at Ai, they said, "Hey, we don't need to pray. We don't need to find God's will. We don't need a spiritual plan. We have done it before, and we can do it again. You don't need to send a whole army, Josh; just send a handful. Send two—maybe three—thousand, because they are insignificant, and we can do it." You can see here that there was pride in their hearts. And the Bible teaches—does it not?—that pride goes before destruction. So, first of all, there was pride. I wonder if today God has blessed you; spiritually, you're coasting. You say, "Well, God has given me a blessing yesterday; God has helped me yesterday. I did this yesterday, and so I can do it today." *"Pride goeth before destruction."* (Proverbs 16:18)

2. Presumption

And the child of pride is what? Presumption. They presumed that God was with them. They never stopped to check; they never looked. They never sought out to see if there was any unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in the camp. After pride comes presumption.

3. Prayerlessness

And if the child of pride is presumption, what is the grandchild of pride? Prayerlessness—they didn't pray. We're going to find out later that Joshua prayed. He prayed after he got in trouble; he prayed a whole lot. And God said, "Joshua, get up: you're wasting your breath. Why are you praying to me now?" I wonder today if there are some of you who are about to fall—and you've been great Christians—because now you're coasting, now you're filled with pride. You think you are a wonderful, Spirit-filled, godly person, because you can look back to a string of victories. And now you're presuming that everything in the future is going to be just like it was in the past. And you've stopped praying. You've stopped seeking the face of God. You've stopped asking God to guide you and lead you. And you are guilty of the same three things that Israel was guilty of when little Ai defeated them: pride, presumption, and prayerlessness.

B. Achan's Sin: Covetousness

All right now, what about this man, Achan, that I just described a little while ago? We said that the sin of Israel was carelessness. What was the sin of Achan? His sin was covetousness. And that also is something that will cause you to fall and to stumble: when you're not satisfied with the lot that God has given you, when you want that which

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does not belong to you. Nothing wrong with having gold, or silver, or a Babylonian garment, except when it's something that belongs to Almighty God and you are coveting that which belongs to Almighty God.

Look, if you will, beginning in verse 19 here of this passage of Scripture: *"And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:"*—now, watch this—*"when I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them."* (Joshua 7:19–21) Now, just underscore that. If carelessness was Israel's sin, covetousness was Achan's sin. He said, "I saw these things, and I coveted them."

What is covetousness? You know, you never hear anybody confess the sin of covetousness, and yet it was the sin that brought the great Apostle Paul to his knees before God and showed him the wickedness of his heart. What is covetousness? It is an unlawful desire that grows in the soil of an unsatisfied heart, a heart that is not finding what we've been singing about—what this trio just sang about: the glory of His presence. And we're thinking now that we need something else to satisfy us, something else to make us whole, something else to give us joy; and covetousness becomes an octopus that comes around our souls and cannot be shaken off. The Bible calls it in the New Testament "the love of the world." And the Bible says in 1 John chapter 2, verses 15 and 16, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* (1 John 2:15)

Now, notice it doesn't say that the love of the Father is not in you because you love the world; it's just opposite of that. If you love the world, it is because the love of the Father is not in you. That's the reason that I said covetousness is an unsatisfied, unlawful desire that grows in the soil of an unsatisfied heart. The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of God's glory and God's grace. And I can tell you that both Israel as a nation, and Achan as an individual, had taken their eyes from the Lord. With Israel, it was pride, presumption, and prayerlessness. With Achan, it was covetousness. And I want you to see the evolution of this sin.

1. He Saw

Listen to this man as he's confessing now, and look in verse 21. First of all, what's the first step? *"I saw."* Look at it: *"When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment…"* (Joshua 7:21) You see, he saw something that he ought not to have been looking at. Now, had he been in the right place, he would never have been looking at all of that at that time. Many of you are going to get in trouble simply because of what you have put before your eyes. Some of you men are staying up late at night watching

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ungodliness on television while your wife has already gone to bed. Some of you businessmen are looking at things in a hotel room that you have absolutely no business looking at. Some of you are watching things now in cybersex on the Internet that you have absolutely no business looking at. You say, "Well, I just want to see." You feed your mind on these dirty movies and filthy magazines, you get your recreation in a nightclub atmosphere, and you're setting yourself up for a fall.

2. He Coveted

Now, notice, first of all, he said, *"I saw."* Then, look at this thing. He said, *"I coveted."* Now, a desire—an unlawful desire—is beginning to build in his heart. This octopus is beginning to wrap its tentacles around his soul. This was the time when he should have confessed. This was the time when he should have said, "O God, there's something growing in my heart that is wrong. It's unclean; it's impure." But he doesn't do this. You see, Achan was a thief in his heart, first. A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he's a thief. It began in his heart. "Out of the heart these things come." (Matthew 15:18) It is covetousness that the Bible calls idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)

3. He Took

Now, watch this: *"I saw"*; *"I coveted."* Now, watch: *"I…took."* Do you see that? He probably never would have thought at another time he would have done such a thing. There are some of you who feel, "I would never do such a thing." You put yourself in that situation; you begin to look at unlawful things; you begin to let that thing brood in your heart until it becomes covetousness, and then at that moment when that opportunity comes, you're going to take it.

Remember what I told you sin was? An undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, and an unprotected life—an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, an unprotected life. Here he was—he had an undetected weakness: he was not satisfied with the things of God. An unexpected opportunity: "There it was; I saw it." An unprotected life: he was not praying; he was not seeking God's covering. And so, "I saw." "I coveted." "I took."

4. He Covered It Up

And now, continue to read this. Look at it again. And he said, "And I coveted them. I took them"—*"and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it"*—"I hid." This is the worst thing of all. The next step is to hide; to cover it up; to say it never happened.

There are some of you right now who don't want to think about what I'm talking about, because in your heart, in your life, in your tent, there's buried some unclean thing. And the worst thing of all is to hide it, to deny it, to alibi, to excuse, to keep it hidden. So he digs down into his tent and he hides it and smoothes the dirt over it. Are

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you trying to do that today? Is there in your life an unconfessed, unrepented-of sin that is hidden? I'm telling you that Achan could not have dug deep enough into the molten core of this earth to hide that sin. And yet he tried—and yet he tried.

Now, put it down: Many times your greatest defeats are going to come after your greatest victories if you begin to coast and take your eyes off the Lord, and get presumptuous, or fail to be satisfied with God.

II. Private Sin Is Never Really Private

Here's the second principle—the second principle is this: that private sin is never really private—private sin is never really private. Now, the Bible called this thing that Achan did "the accursed thing." Why? Because the curse of God is upon sin, and sin that is hidden will bring you to ruin; it will keep you from victory—that unbroken victory that God wants you to have. But now, listen to me very carefully: *If you are bound to sin, you're bound to suffer.* Just as surely as you put your uncovered hand on a hot stove, you're going to be burned. If you're bound to sin, you're bound to suffer. But you will not suffer alone. The Bible says, "No man lives unto himself, and no man dies unto himself." (Romans 14:7) Your sin, my friend, will affect other people. Private sin is never really private.

A. Sin Brings Dishonor to God

Let me show you what Achan's sin did. Look, if you will, in verses 8 and 9 of this same chapter. Joshua is praying and he says, *"O LORD, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and shall cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"* (Joshua 7:8–9) Joshua said, "Look, we're defeated; O God, disgrace to your name!" Do you care about the name of your God? *I had rather die by torture than to bring disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ.* If there's hidden sin in your life, you're going to cause the people of God to stumble and to fall, and you're going to bring disgrace to Almighty God. That's the reason that David prayed. He said, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."* (Psalm 51:4)

I think, Brother Jim, about the scandals that were in the church with some they call *televangelists*. Can you imagine how much fodder that was for the late-night obscene talk-show people as they laughed and joked and ridiculed the things of God, and the name of our great God was dragged through the dust and the mire and the filth because of hidden sin?

B. Sin Brings Defeat to Your Brother

What does it do? Friend, I want to tell you, it brings dishonor to God. But I'll tell you what

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else it does: It brings defeat to your brothers. Look, if you will, in verse 12 of this same chapter: *"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed."* (Joshua 7:12) You see, don't tell me it's none of my business what you do, and I can't tell you it's none of my business what I do. Folks, we are in this together. And when your heart is not right with God, when there's unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your heart and in your life, not only do you dishonor God and bring dishonor to God; you bring defeat to your brothers and your sisters. The Bible says, "When one member suffers, every member suffers with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26) One drop of poison hurts the whole body.

C. Sin Brings Disgrace to Your Family

I'll tell you what else he did: Not only did he bring dishonor to God; not only did he bring defeat to his brothers; he brought disgrace to his family. Notice in chapter 7, verse 1: *"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing:"*—that's the entire nation; but watch this—*"for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing."* (Joshua 7:1) Do you see how his family's dragged into this thing? I'm not a perfect man, but I would hate to bring disgrace to my parents, and I would hate to bring disgrace to my children. But here was a man who sinned. He might have thought, "I'm doing this all by myself," but he dishonored God; "I'm doing this all for myself," but his brothers were defeated; "I'm doing this all to myself," but he disgraced his family. Some of you are giving your dad gray hairs. Some of you are pinching wrinkles into your mother's face. Some of you kids, some of you teenagers, there's sin in your life, and you're disgracing your parents. Your mother, your dad, would die for you, and yet you've got this sin in your heart and in your life.

D. Sin Brings Destruction to Your Loved Ones

I'll tell you what else it did: It brought destruction to his loved ones. Look, if you will, in verses 24 and 25: *"And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones."* (Joshua 7:24–25) Not just the man, but his sons, his daughters, his wife: they're all stoned and burned with fire.

You say, "That's not fair! That's not right!" Well, you see, what happened is, he corrupted his family. Where did he hide this? Not outside the tent; in the tent. They had become partakers of this crime, and now his children are destroyed because of his lie. And, mister, if you go to hell, that's one thing; but God have mercy upon you if you drag

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your sons and daughters into hell, too, because of your sin! Hidden sin—wicked sin, vile sin—destroys loved ones.

A soul winner was going out to speak to a man about Jesus Christ. That man was a man like so many modern sophisticates today. He was in the living room; he was acting icily nice to that man who was witnessing for Jesus, and he was, you know, coy as some people. If you've ever witnessed much, you can see this man in your mind's eye. He just said to the man, "Well, thank you. I appreciate your coming. Thank you for giving us those things to consider. Good day. We may come down there to the church sometime," and so forth. A little guy who had not yet even started into school was watching this whole episode. The father was not even aware that the little boy was watching. He saw his dad and saw the soul winner and all of that. He saw the soul winner with his shoulders humped over, walking out in seeming defeat. That little boy jumped up into his daddy's lap, rubbed his daddy's beard, and said, as he looked into his daddy's face, "Dad, we don't want to be an old Christian, do we?"—"Dad, we don't want to be an old Christian, do we?" They can read you like a book. They know what's important to you.

Here was a man that drug so much down with him. Your greatest defeats may come after your greatest victories, when you get careless and dissatisfied. I'll tell you something else: Private sin is never private. None of us live to ourselves; none of us die to ourselves.

III. Every Sin That You Cover, God Will Uncover

Here's the third thing—and I want you to listen very carefully to me, dear friend: Every sin that you cover, God will uncover. Have you got it? Every sin that you cover, God will uncover. Look, if you will now, in verse 16 of this same chapter here. And the Bible says, *"So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: and he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: and he brought the household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."* (Joshua 7:16–19)

Now, if one sin goes uncovered, Satan has conquered. Listen to me: Every sin that you cover, God will uncover. There is the ultimate revelation of that sin—the ultimate confession of that sin—when Joshua said, "Give glory to God. Now, confess." (Joshua 7:21) He wasn't giving glory to God so that he could get mercy; he didn't get mercy—he didn't get any mercy. He was stoned. And yet Joshua said, "Confess it; give glory to God." Did you know that every sin you cover will be uncovered to the glory of God?

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Every sin you cover will be uncovered to the glory of God. You know, that's what the Bible says: "Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God." (Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10–11) One of these days, if God does not get glory in mercy, God will give glory in judgment. Are you listening? Every sin that you cover, God will uncover; and that which is done in secret will be shouted from the rooftop. Things that you've done in your bedroom, things you've done on business trips, things that you have done that you think nobody knows about—one of these days, it will be totally revealed. Everything you cover, God will uncover.

Can you imagine: "Give glory to God"? I can see Judas as he stands before the Lord: "Judas, you denied Him. You sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. Deny Him now." I can see the blasphemer. Those of you who take God's name in vain and curse Him, I wonder when you stand before Jesus Christ, will you curse Him to His face? Those of you who have made your obscene jokes, you blasphemers; those of you who may be listening on this television program as a joke—you don't even know what you're tuned to—when you stand before Him, your obscene jokes are not going to be so funny. You're going to meet the Lord. I'm telling you, *"Every knee shall bow…and every tongue shall confess."*

There is the ultimate revelation of that sin, the ultimate confession of that sin, and the ultimate retribution of that sin. Here was a man who was judged, who was stoned, who was put to death: *"For the wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23) *"The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die."* (Ezekiel 18:4; Ezekiel 18:20) And if any sin—one-half of one sin—ever goes by unpunished, Satan will have won.

IV. Every Sin That You Uncover, God Will Cover

I must go to the last and final principle very quickly. I've given you four. Your greatest defeats may come after your greatest victories. Private sin is never really private. Every sin that you endeavor to cover, God will uncover. That which is done in secret shall be shouted from the housetop. A newspaper had this motto: "If you don't want it printed, don't let it happen." Now, here's the final thing—and I love this: Every sin that you uncover, God will cover—every sin that you uncover, God will cover.

I want you to imagine a scene that did not happen. I want you to see Achan as he plants all of that in his tent there and covers it up, rolls out his bed mat over it, and tries to sleep, and then he says, "My God, what have I done? How could I have been so foolish? Wife, wake up! Children, get up! Pray! Look what we've done! How could we do such a thing? Dig it up! Give it to me! Where's Joshua's tent? Joshua, get up! Get up! Joshua, Joshua, let me tell you what I've done! Oh, Joshua, I was a fool! God said not to do this, but I've done it! Joshua, here's the silver. Joshua, here's the gold. Here's the garment. Pray for me, Joshua. I've sinned against God. Pray for me, Joshua. I've

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sinned against God. Joshua, let's get an animal. Let's make a blood sacrifice. I need to be forgiven."

Let me tell you what the Bible says in the book of Proverbs—and listen carefully: *"He that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* (Proverbs 28:13) Would God have forgiven him? Absolutely! *"He that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* Justice is God giving us what we deserve; mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. We don't need justice; we need mercy. *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."*

Now, let's come back to where we started. I said to you, unbroken victory is God's plan for you. The key to unbroken victory is not perfection; it is continual, perpetual confession; keeping your heart right, where there is no un-confessed sin, no private sin, no buried sin.

Conclusion

I'm going to give you a testimony—you might think I'm bragging, but in my heart there's no hidden sin. You see, I would be a sheer fool to try to minister and preach with sin in my heart. I'd hurt you. I would hurt this church. I would hurt my family. I would hurt my parents. I would hurt my children. I would disgrace my God. But when we walk in the light as He is in the light, God blesses us.

Your greatest failure may come after your greatest victories. Private sin is never really private. What you cover, God will uncover; but what you uncover, God will cover. And that's the reason Paul says in Romans chapter 4, *"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."* (Romans 4:7) *"Whose sins are covered."* How? By the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

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The Sin That Lost a War

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: Joshua 7:1–5

"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel."
JOSHUA 7:1

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Introduction

Turn now to Joshua chapter 7. We're on a journey with Joshua, and what a thrilling journey it is, because Joshua is the Old Testament book that teaches, typifies and illustrates New Testament victory! Joshua chapter 7, beginning in verse 1—we're thinking today about "The Sin that Lost a War"—"The Sin that Lost a War." Joshua chapter 7, verse 1: *"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel."* (Joshua 7:1)

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And may I just parenthetically take you back to Joshua 6, verse 18. What is *"the accursed thing"*? God had said after Jericho had fallen this to the children of Israel: *"And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD"*—*"they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."* (Joshua 6:18–19) That is, God had just given a mighty victory, as you remember Sunday before last, when Jericho lost, and all of the spoils of the battle were to be given into the treasury of the Lord, and if anybody were to take any of the spoils of the battle for himself, he would be taking an accursed thing. And that's what the children of Israel did.

And so now we begin reading in verse 2 of chapter 7: *"And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai."* Now, the next city that they had to conquer was a village named Ai. And so Joshua is sending out some men to reconnoiter the land and to just see what needs to be done. And verse 3: *"And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him,"*—oh, and I want you to listen to the confidence that they seemed to exude—*"Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few"*—"Tut-tut, ha ha, we'll finish them off." *"So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water."* (Joshua 7:2–5)

Now I said that perpetual victory, continual victory, is to be God's plan for His people. And yet, here they are ignominiously, terribly, horribly, disgracefully defeated. They run whimpering like dogs before the satanic, demon-infested hordes of Ai. How could such a thing happen to the children of God who are supposed to be victorious? Well, there was sin in the camp.

But I want you to see what happened. I just want you to imagine that you're back there now in the camp of Israel and Jericho is lying before you in desolation and ruin and all of the entire walls have caved in upon themselves. And in the city now there's not a living soul, but outside the walls of Jericho is encamped the people of Israel. Perhaps it's a moonlit night and all is quiet; all are asleep, except for one man. Nervously, he makes his way to the door of his tent. He looks this way, he looks that way, to make certain that no one is watching. And then he makes his way over the fallen rubble, over the walls, through the ruin of the city of Jericho, into the market place. And he's looking, watching, seeing what he might find; and suddenly something is white

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and shining on the ground. He stoops down and picks it up. Why, it's two hundred shekels of silver, more money that he's ever seen, perhaps, in his life. He lets it flow through his fingers like water. He puts it in the leather bag and hoards it in his bosom.

He goes a little further. What's that on the ground? Looks like a piece of cheese. I know it's not cheese—it's a wedge of gold, pure as gold. With feverish fingers, he picks it up and caresses it. A little further, he sees the corner of a piece of cloth from beneath the dust and rubble. He takes it, shakes it, pulls it out—a sparkling ornament is upon it. It has many varied colors—it's a Babylonian garment. It looks like it's fit for royalty. Why, a soldier could never afford anything like that! Oh, he looks at it; he caresses it; he's overcome with greed. He bundles it together; he makes his way back to his tent, looking again to make certain that no one sees him. He enters into a tent, rolls back his mattress, digs a hole in the floor of his tent, and places in there the Babylonian garments, two hundred shekels of silver, a wedge of gold. He puts the dirt back in the hole. He smoothes it out ever so smoothly, unrolls the mattress, lies down with a smile on his face, and congratulates himself, for he's gotten away with it. No one has seen him—except God. Except God—God saw him.

The next morning, Israel is going again to battle; the next morning, as the mist arises over the river Jordan, the trumpets begin to speak out in the camp of Israel, and three thousand handpicked men go against a little village—this time not a mighty walled city like Jericho, but just a little village. They go up to win the battle, but the men of Ai turn on the people of God, and they are horribly, disgracefully—as we have said—defeated. Thirty-six men—soldiers, fine men—lose their life. The name of God is disgraced. There was a sin that lost a war.

I. The Underlying Cause of This Sin

There are three things I want us to notice about that sin. The first thing I want us to notice is the underlying cause of that sin—the underlying cause of that sin. Now, actually, you're going to find out as you study this passage that there was a man who committed a sin, but not only did God hold the man accountable; God held all Israel accountable. You're going to find out that God said that Israel had sinned.

And so, take up our reading in Joshua chapter 7 now, and verse 6: *"And Joshua rent his clothes…"*—that means, boys and girls, that he tore his clothing. That's what a person would do in this day when they were in great distress. They'd just take hold of their clothing, and just rip it—*"Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, O LORD God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O LORD,*

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what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name? And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?"—"Joshua, get out of the dust. Quit your sniveling; get upon your feet"—*"Israel hath sinned"—"Israel hath sinned."* (Joshua 7:6–11)

A. Israel's Corporate Sin: Carelessness

"Wait a minute, pastor. I thought there was a man named Achan who sinned. Does God hold a whole nation accountable for one man's sin?" There's a sense in which He does, because Israel, had they had been right, could have prevented it. Did you know that there's a very real sense in which the Bible teaches that we as a church are responsible for the sins of the city of Memphis? Did you know that Christians are responsible for the sins in America? Have you ever identified yourself with the sins of your people? It's about time we understood that there is a corporate guilt. *"Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."* (Romans 14:22)

What did Israel allow? What was Israel's sin?

1. The Sin of Pride

May I tell you that the sin of Israel was the sin of carelessness, marked first of all by pride. Look in verse 3 again: *"And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few."* (Joshua 7:3) "We'll polish them off; we did it before, and we can do it again"—that's exactly what they thought. You see, "We already had Jericho. Look what we did to Jericho! Oh boy, watch what we're going to do unto them!" You see, they forgot that Jericho wasn't their victory; Jericho was God's victory—God's victory! Oh, but somehow, in their mind, they had the idea that they had done it.

You heard about the woodpecker that was pecking on a pine tree when suddenly a bolt of lightning hit it and split it right down the middle. He looked at it, backed off for a while, flew away. Later on, he was seen flying back with nine other woodpeckers. He said, "There it is, gentlemen: right over there."

It's so easy to want to take the credit, isn't it? You know, sometimes God will bless a church, and the very blessings of God upon that church are not what they have done with their program and their personalities and their propaganda and their paraphernalia: it is what God is done with His power. But when we forget that, then we're headed for a fall: *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."* (Proverbs 16:18)

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2. The Sin of Presumption

First of all, the sin of Israel—the careless sin—was pride. And then, the child of pride is presumption, and "We can do it." You see, when you reek with pride, you get very presumptive; you think that you're the one who can do it. Let me give you a warning this morning, and let me give you an encouragement—both an encouragement and a warning at the same time. There is no stronghold of Satan, there is no power of sin, that the child of God cannot overcome in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Isn't that wonderful? No power of Satan is so great that it can stand against you, there is no Jericho of sin that can withstand you, filled with the Holy Spirit. That's encouragement. There is no power so great you cannot overcome it. But you listen to me. There is no power of Satan so small that you can overcome it in the strength of your flesh.

And that's exactly where God has put you. Nothing can stand before you in the power of the Holy Spirit, and there's nothing that you can overcome in the strength of your flesh. They overcame in the power of the Lord, and they failed in the strength of their flesh. They presumed that God would be with them.

When Manley Beasley was here, he told a story I think I shall never forget. And I don't remember all of the details, but a missionary was somewhere out in the bush country, and a lion attacked. And this missionary said, "O God, O God, help me!" And God miraculously delivered the missionary from the paw and the mouth of the lion. That night, he came home and thanked God for the mighty victory, but when he tried to go to sleep, there was a mosquito in the room. The lights went out. Have you ever been there? Lights on: mosquito disappears; lights off. Lights on: no mosquito; lights off. Same thing. All night long, he fought that miserable mosquito. The next morning, there he was upon the wall gorged with blood, with victory in his wings. A mosquito had won. And God spoke to him and said, "My child, you trusted me to deliver you from the paw of a lion, and all night long you were defeated by a mosquito when you fought by your own strength."

Oh, let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: It's not the Jericho's that defeat the average Christian; it's the Ai's. It's not the big things; it's the little foxes that spoil the vine. It's the things we think: "We can handle that." To take care of Ai: "We can handle that." "Oh, don't send everybody up to take care of Ai. After all, aren't we known as the great military warriors and victors?"

3. The Sin of Prayerlessness

The sin of pride. And the child of pride is presumption. And the grandchild of pride is prayerlessness, because once we presume we can do it, then we don't pray anymore. Pride, presumption, prayerlessness—Joshua wasn't praying. How do I know he wasn't praying? For when he finally did pray, God showed him exactly what was wrong. And had he prayed before he went, he would have known before what was wrong.

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Do you know what we do? We wait until we make a mess of things, and then we come to God in prayer. Prayer needs to be our first thought, not our last resort. We need to wake up in the morning and put on the whole armor of God through prayer. All of our failures are really prayer failures that root in our presumption that roots in our pride.

B. **Achan's Personal Sin: Covetousness**

Now, that was the cause of the national sin of Israel. But what about the personal sin of Achan? What was the cause of his sin? Look in Joshua chapter 7 and verse 19: *"And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."* (Joshua 7:19–21) I want you to underscore that phrase—verse 21: *"then I coveted them."* Covetousness was his sin. Carelessness was the sin of Israel. Covetousness was the sin of Achan: *"I coveted."*

Now, why did he covet these things? What is covetousness? Covetousness is an inordinate desire for things that are not rightfully ours, things that we have no right to. Now, God wants to supply and give to us everything that we need and everything that we have a right to, but the Bible says, *"Thou shalt not covet."* (Exodus 20:17)

You see, covetousness is an octopus that just wraps itself around the human soul and cannot be satisfied and cannot be shaken off apart from the Lord our God. Another word for covetousness is *worldliness—worldliness*; he was just in love with the world. You know, the Bible says, *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"*—1 John chapter 2, verse 15—*"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* (1 John 2:15)

You know, Achan's real problem wasn't the love of the world; his real problem was that *"the love of the Father is not in him."* Now, you see, the love of the world is symptomatic of the fact that the love of the Father is not in you. It wasn't that he loved the world too much. He didn't love God enough. Did you hear that? It wasn't that he loved the world enough. He didn't love God enough. You see, *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* The love of the world is a symptom that the love of God is not in you.

Suppose you're driving your automobile down the road and the red light comes on the dashboard, which means there's no oil in the crankcase, well now, would you take a hammer and break that light and say, "Well, I've fixed that"? "That took care of you!"

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You haven't really fixed it. You see, the red light on the dashboard is simply a warning, an indicator, a symptom: there's no oil in the crankcase. *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* The love of the world is the red light that tells us that the love of the Father is not in us.

And the way to handle the covetousness, and the lack of satisfaction and happiness, and the worldliness and sin in our life is to get the love of God in our hearts. And if you're sinning, ladies and gentlemen; if there's secret sin in your life and covetousness that is warping and ruining your life, rather than trying to fight that sin, why don't you just load up on Jesus Christ? Why don't you just let the love of God flow in your heart and fill your heart and soul until you're satisfied with Jesus?

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.
—HELEN H. LEMMEL

This is the underlying cause of the sin: with Israel, it was carelessness; with Achan, it was covetousness.

II. The Unfailing Curse of This Sin

Now, the second thing I want you to notice is not the underlying cause, but I want you to notice the unfailing curse of this sin—the unfailing curse. You see, God said, "Don't take of the cursed things." I want you to know that there is a curse of God upon secret unforgiven, unforsaken sin in the life of God's people. Unconfessed, unforsaken sin is a plague; it is woe; it is a condemnation in your life.

Now, God has fixed an unsaved man where he can sin and prosper. Did you know that? Isn't that strange? Did you know that an unsaved man will be able to get away with a lot that you're not able to get away with? God just leaves him alone. That's the reason the Bible speaks of *"the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree."* (Psalm 37:35) Oh, they just get along fine. So with the wicked, but not so with His children, not so with His people: God has so fixed us that we cannot sin and prosper. And when we fail to prosper, when we fail to have victory, it is not that God has failed; it is that there's sin in the camp. And we don't need to go to God and say, "Now, God, why did you get us into this mess?" because He didn't—He didn't! There's sin in the camp.

A. Dishonor to His God

And I want you to notice the unfailing curse of unconfessed sin. I want you to notice what Achan's sin did. First of all, it dishonored his God. Look in 8: *"O LORD, what shall I*

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say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth:"—and notice the last part of this—*"and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"* (Joshua 7:8–9)

You see, sin dishonors the name of God. We bear His name. This city is watching Bellevue Baptist Church. Your neighbor is watching your life. And, dear friend, when you fail, not only do you bring reproach to yourself; you bring reproach to the name of our great God.

After all, we've said that He is for us and He will give us the victory. And when we make our boast in the Lord, and then we fall before Satan, and then, when we go down in defeat, what does that do to the name of God—when we take the blood-stained banner of the Lord Jesus Christ and drag it through the dust in defeat? And yet, all of the time, we're saying how great our God is. And the pagan, the heathen, the Canaanites, they laugh, they sneer, they say, "He's talking about his great God: look at him running before the people of Ai!"

B. **Defeat to His Brethren**

What is the curse of sin? It dishonored his God. But not only did it dishonor his God; it brought defeat to his brethren. Look in verse 12: *"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies."* (Joshua 7:12) Achan alone wasn't the one who was defeated. They were all defeated. You see, we're members one of another. One drop of poison hurts the whole body.

Sometimes church members say to a pastor, or to a Sunday School teacher, or to a well-meaning friend who's trying to correct them, "Well, it's none of your business." I want to tell you something, friend: It is some of my business what you do, and it is some of your business what I do, because we rise and fall together. Achan sinned, but God said, *"Israel hath sinned."* (Joshua 7:11) We're in this thing together. The Bible says, *"We are members one of another."* (Ephesians 4:25) And the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, *"One member suffer, all the members suffer with it."* (1 Corinthians 12:26)

Have you ever hit your thumb with a hammer? What's the first thing you do? You grab it and it goes *oh-wah*, *oh-wah*—just like *that*—and what's the next thing you do? You stick it in your mouth and suck on it. And what's the next thing you do? You do a little dance—just like *this*. What do your knees have to do with your thumb? We're in this thing together. When *"one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."*

Achan sinned; but God said, *"Israel hath sinned."* And there was defeat to the brethren. You might think it's your own personal life, but I want you to know Bellevue Baptist Church will be victorious to the degree that you're victorious. Bellevue Baptist Church will fail to the degree that you fail. We're members one of another, and God has

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called us to do a great task. And one of these days you'll face your God, and He'll say, "Not only am I going to hold you responsible for your personal sin, but I'm going to hold you responsible for the defeat of your brothers. You're a part of an army, and you failed."

C. **Disgrace to His Parents**

Dishonor to his God. Defeat to his brethren. And disgrace to his parents. I want you to go back again and look in chapter 7, the beginning of verse 1: *"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for…"*—watch it—*"for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing."* (Joshua 7:7) His entire family is disgraced. His entire family is dragged down.

Don't you care enough for your mother and your daddy? Don't you care enough for your grandparents? Don't you have a little family honor? Don't you know that the Bible says that you're to *"honour thy father and thy mother"*? (Exodus 20:12) And you can't do it by living a sinful life. Not only do you hurt you; you hurt them. Some of you kids, I want to tell you, when you face the Judgment Seat of Christ, He's going to hold you responsible for those grey hairs you've given your daddy and the wrinkles you pinched into your mother's brow—the disgrace that comes to our parents when we sin. They love us. Our life's blood is in them. We represent them; we cannot disassociate ourselves from them.

D. **Death to His Loved Ones**

Dishonor to his God. Defeat to his brethren. Disgrace to his family. And death to his loved ones. I want you to notice in chapter 7 and verse 24: "*And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire."* (Joshua 7:24–25) Oh, my goodness, his children went down with him; his children died with him. You see, evidently they had become accomplices to the crime. When he brought this bootie home, there was no way he could have brought it into the tent without his family knowing it. But rather than repudiating the sin of their daddy, they didn't have what it took.

Here was a father who corrupted his children. And so, not only did it bring disgrace to his parents, but it brought death to his children. One man's sin, what a terrible thing it is! I want to tell you something, mister: It's bad enough that you might live a sinful life, but what a rotten shame it is that you would corrupt your children! "Oh," you say, "well, I don't corrupt my children. I admit I do curse a little, and gamble a little, keep a little

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booze in the icebox—it doesn't hurt me." That's a pretty selfish way to look at it, isn't it? Isn't that pretty selfish: "doesn't hurt me"? You'd be surprised how that child is watching you.

I heard of a man who was one of these cynical man-of-the-world types, and a loving, earnest soul winner came to his house and tried to witness to him and bring this man to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know how the man of the world speaks. He was nice, but he said, "Well, you know, if I were to go down there, the church roof would fall in. And, after all, you know, those hypocrites down there, all they want is money. And I don't know—I've got my own way. I'm all right. I've got my own religion. Don't worry about me." You know all of the things; you know how the man speaks. This little boy, not even yet in school, was there listening to this whole thing, and this earnest soul winner went out with a tear in the corner of his eye. And the little boy who had listened to the whole thing with a smile crawled up in his daddy's lap, put his arms around his daddy's neck, and gave him a big squeeze and a kiss, and said, "We don't want to be an old Christian, do we, Daddy?"

"We don't want to be an old Christian, do we, Daddy?" Maybe you've not shown it just as overtly as this father had, but I want to tell you there are little eyes that are watching; there are little ears that are listening. And here was a man who not only brought defeat to his brethren, and disgrace to his parents; he brought death to his children.

Sin is a terrible thing. None of us live unto ourselves, and none of us die unto ourselves; and if you don't care about you, then why don't you care about us? And why don't you care about God? I want you to know that sin brings ruin. There's a curse upon unconfessed, unrepented-of sin. "It would be better for you that a millstone were tied around your neck and you were cast into the depth of the sea than to cause one of these little ones to stumble." (Mark 9:42)

III. The Ultimate Consequences of This Sin

Now I want us to notice one last thing this morning: Not only the underlying cause of this sin, which happened to be carelessness on the part of Israel, and covetousness on the part of Achan; and not only the unfailing curse of this sin—a dishonor to God, a defeat to the brethren, a disgrace to the family, and a death to the children; but I want you to notice finally the ultimate consequences of this sin—the ultimate consequences—because, you see, there is not only an immediate consequence, not only an unfailing curse, but there is an ultimate consequence of unconfessed, unrepented-of sin.

A. The Revelation of Secret Sin

Now, the first ultimate consequence is this: the ultimate revelation of that sin. One day it

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will be revealed. You can hide it from me; you can hide it from your mother; you can hide it from your dad; you can hide it from your neighbor, from your husband, from your wife; but if there's unconfessed sin in your life, I guarantee you on the authority of the Word of God it will ultimately be revealed. Look in verse 18—chapter 7 and verse 18: *"And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken."* (Joshua 7:18)

Now, what that simply means—and I wish I had time to elucidate—but that by a process of systematic illumination the finger of accusation, by the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, pointed right to a man named Achan. And what does that tell us? It tells us this—and I want you to listen: Be sure your sin will find you out; be sure—be absolutely sure! There is no way that your sin can get by unless it's washed out in the blood of Jesus. There is the ultimate revelation of that sin.

Now you may think that you're getting by with it now; but one day, skeletons are going to come out of closets and dance on parlor floors. One of these days, you are going to face those things that you thought nobody knew about: that unconfessed, unforsaken, unrepudiated, unjudged sin. The ultimate consequence is there will be a revelation of that sin.

I want every boy and girl in this place to turn to Romans 14, and I want you to mark a passage of Scripture—Romans 14, verse 11: *"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."* (Romans 14:11) Mark it down, kids: You're going to face it sooner or later; you're going to face the Lord. There is the revelation—there is the revelation. Sooner or later, every knee shall bow; not some of the knees: *"Every knee shall bow…every tongue shall confess."* Your sin must be revealed. A county newspaper used to have this motto: "If you don't want it printed, don't let it happen"—"don't let it happen." Oh, dear friend, there is coming a time when there is the ultimate revelation of that sin.

B. **The Recognition of Secret Sin**

But not only the ultimate revelation of that sin, but the ultimate recognition of that sin; not only will God cause it to be revealed, but you're going to have to admit it. Did you know that everybody confesses his sin: it's just a matter of when? Did you know that? Look here in Joshua chapter 7 and verse 19: *"And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done."* (Joshua 7:19–20) And he spelled it out.

Now he didn't get any forgiveness when he did this. This was confession after he was caught. He had plenty of time before to make a confession, but he didn't do it. But

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the reason he confessed now was to give glory to God. Did you know that God is going to get glory, whether you accept Him or whether you don't? Did you know that? Whether you walk down this aisle and confess your sins, or whether you don't, God's going to get glory. If God doesn't get glory in salvation, God gets glory in judgment; but God gets glory. No sin ever goes by. Give the glory to God. *"Every knee shall bow…every tongue shall confess."* (Romans 14:11) One of these days, you're going to confess. It's not a matter of if you're going to confess; it's only a matter of when. That's the only matter. You see, there will be the recognition of that sin.

When I was a little boy, my dad said, "Adrian, don't you play in the road. If you do, I'll surely spank you." Now he didn't say that because he didn't love me; he said that because he did love me. And, you know, he says, "The reason I'm spanking you is because I love you." Well, I was his favorite: he loved me more than my brother or sister; he just really loved me. "And," he said, "this is the reason I do this."

One day, I was playing in Florida Avenue, right in front of our street there in West Palm Beach, Florida, and my brother, dear brother, saw me playing in the road and told my daddy. I heard my brother tell my daddy, and I ran upstairs to hide. And I went up to the second floor in our big house where we lived there in West Palm Beach and hid under a bed in an upstairs bedroom. I heard my daddy say, "Adrian!" I didn't answer. "Adrian!" I didn't answer. Then I heard him start asking everybody in the house, "Where's Adrian?" No one knew. I knew where I was, but no one else. And then I heard my daddy's footsteps coming up the stairs: *clump*, *clump*, *clump*. I'm still under the bed. I heard my daddy go into this bedroom: "Adrian, are you in here?" No answer. I heard him go in another bedroom: "Adrian?" No answer. I heard him go in the bathroom: "Adrian?" No answer.

Then I heard the doorknob in the bedroom where I was rattle and heard my father's feet at the door. I came out from under the bed, went to the door covered with dust, opened the door, and I said, "Dad, I want to talk to you." I said, "Daddy, do you remember when you told me that if I ever did anything wrong, if I would come to you and tell you about it, you might not punish me? Do you remember that, Dad?" Do you know I got the worst licking I've ever gotten, I believe? What was wrong? You know exactly what was wrong: I waited too late. I waited until the judgment fell; I waited until my dad was there in judgment.

C. **The Retribution of Secret Sin**

Oh, listen, dear friend. I want to tell you there is first of all the revelation of secret sin. Then, there is the recognition of secret sin. And then, there is the retribution of secret sin. God must punish sin. God will punish sin. Sin always brings defeat, and sin brings loss, even in the life of the Christian, at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Oh, thank God our

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sins are under the blood, so far as judicially determining whether we're going to heaven or hell; but don't you ever get the idea that because you're a Christian you can sin and get away with it. Sin brings defeat to the child of God.

Conclusion

Now, that's kind of a low note to end on, so I don't want to end on that note. I want to end on a high note. I want you to imagine something that didn't happen. I want you to imagine Achan: he's asleep in the tent—at least, trying to sleep—but his conscience is thundering in his brain, his fingers are trembling; he says, "My God, what have I done to dishonor and disobey my God by stealing these things, taking of the accursed thing? What a fool I am!" I see Achan now in my imagination as he unrolls the mattress, as he digs frantically in the earth: he takes out the two hundred shekels of silver, the wedge of gold, the Babylonian garment; he puts them in his feverish hands, he runs to Joshua's tent and he says, "Joshua! Joshua! Come out here! Joshua, listen to me. Joshua, I've been a fool. I've sinned against God. Joshua, look: I want to restore this. Put it in the treasure of the Lord. Oh, Joshua, say a prayer for me! Joshua, I want you to know that I repudiate my sin. I confess my sin, and I ask for mercy." Do you think he would have had mercy?

I tell you, I know he would. Achan need not have died. Do you know what the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 28, verse 13? *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* (Proverbs 28:13) Isn't that a great verse? *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* Friend, you can't really cover your sin—that's the whole thing. You could dig deeper into the coal of this earth than ever a man has been, down to the very molten core, and God would find that sin. You could heap mountains upon it, but you'll not cover it. But the moment you uncover it, then God covers it. The moment you uncover it, *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."*

Do you know the difference between grace and mercy? When God shows us grace, He gives us what we don't deserve; but when God shows us mercy, He doesn't give us what we deserve. Isn't our God great? He's a God of grace who gives us what we don't deserve and who doesn't give us what we do deserve. And His grace and His mercy and His love are rich and full and free in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's plan for you, for me, that we live victoriously every day of our life. But sin can cause us to lose the way.

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The Valley of Decision

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 23, 1977 **Time: 1100**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 8:1–2

"And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land."
JOSHUA 8:2

Outline

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I. The Waywardness That God Pardons
II. The Wickedness That God Punishes
III. The Will That God Permits
  A. Immediate Joy
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Introduction

Now, turn to Joshua chapter 8—Joshua chapter 8—and we'll read the first two verses. Today we're talking on this subject: "The Valley of Decision"—"The Valley of Decision." Joshua chapter 8, and beginning in verse 1: *"And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land: and thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it."* (Joshua 8:1–2)

Now the same God that gave victory at Jericho is giving victory at Ai. Remember now that the children of Israel are possessing the land; they're possessing their possessions, and they had marched around the walls of Jericho. And then, they gave a shout; the walls came a tumbling down. And then, they sinned; they disobeyed the Lord. And when they went up against Ai, they were not able to take Ai. As a matter of fact, they were defeated and shamed ignominiously. They fled before the people of Ai. Then, they repented of their sin; they dealt with their sin; they judged their sin. And God now

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says, “Since you’ve dealt with your sin, I’ve given Ai to you, this other city.” And God says something that I want you to particularly note. He says, “As I gave you Jericho, I’ll give Ai.” In other words, the same God who defeated Jericho is going to defeat Ai.

But I want you to notice He does it in such a different way. They marched around the walls of Jericho, gave a shout, and the walls came down. But this time, God says, “You’re going to take Ai by a strategy; you’re going to take them by an ambush.” And as you go on and read this chapter, you’re going to find out what Joshua did was to take a group of men, about thirty thousand, put them up in the mountains behind Ai, and then Joshua came up with the rest of the army in front of Ai. And when the men of the city of Ai came out against Joshua, Joshua fled out into the wilderness, drew the men out. The men up in the mountain, by an ambush, came down into the city and burned the city. The men of Ai turned around, saw their city burning, went around, and tried to flee back. But the men came out of the city. And those men who’d been fleeing from Ai turned around, they caught them in a pinch, and they were destroyed. It was a marvelous strategy.

As a matter of fact, did you know that they study the campaigns of Joshua in the military archives and schools of Israel today? They study what Joshua did, because it was a great strategy. And you can come back and read this if you want to in the eighth chapter in the book of Joshua. But I don’t have time to talk about all that right now, because, believe it or not, we’re going to study the whole chapter this morning. And so we’re going to have to really listen, because we’re doing this chapter by chapter. But the important thing is this: that God gave Jericho to the Israelites, and God gave Ai to the Israelites; but God did it in two separate ways.

Now, you see, so many times we need to learn a lesson, and it is this lesson: that the methods of God often change—the methods often change. The *who* is a whole lot more important than the *how*, and sometimes we get hung up on the *how*. Sometimes we think God has to do the same thing every day, and we get all discomforted if God doesn’t do it exactly tomorrow like He did it yesterday.

Friend, the important thing is that God is doing it. Did you know that one of the worst things that can happen to the church is to fall into a rut—to think that we have to keep on having the same programs every year that we used to have? Do you know what the seven last words of the church are? “We never did it that way before.” That’s right. We think because God did it that way before that God is honor-bound to do it that way again. And sometimes we get into an argument with people over methods. Friend, methods are not important; it is God that is important. And God can take Jericho one way, and Ai another way, if He wants to.

Did you hear about the three blind men whom Jesus healed and were in a testimony meeting? You know, Jesus healed one blind man by taking spittle and putting it in the

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man's eyes; and the man's eyes were opened, and he saw. Jesus healed another blind man by taking mud and anointing the blinded man's eyes with mud. And Jesus just simply touched another man's eyes, and his eyes were opened. Three blind men Jesus healed. Can you imagine those three blind men in a testimony meeting as to how Jesus heals blind men? One man says, "Well, He spits in your eyes: that's the way He does it." The other man says, "You're a heretic. The way Jesus heals blind men's eyes is with mud: that's the only way He healed me. I ought to know." And the third man says, "You're both wrong. Jesus touches your eyes, and that's the way He heals." And right there three new denominations were born: the *spittites*, the *muddites*, and the *touchites*—and they just get in a big argument.

You see, the important thing is not *how* God does it; the important thing is *that* God does it, right? God's methods change—God's methods change—but God's personality, and God's character, and God's principles, never change. And I want you to notice three things in this passage of Scripture, not about the method of God, but about the character of God. The methods change, but the character of God never changes.

I. The Waywardness That God Pardons

And the first thing I want us to notice is the waywardness that He pardons—the waywardness that He pardons. God's people in Joshua chapter 7 were a wayward people; they disobeyed the Lord. And yet God pardoned them. God forgave them, and God gave them a brand new fresh start. And I want to tell you, it is the nature of God—hallelujah—to forgive sin. Isn't that wonderful?

You know, so many times we think of God as being so cruel, so stern, so unyielding; and sometimes, we think holds a grudge. I'm here to tell you that we may hold grudges, but God doesn't hold grudges. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) And there may be somebody here—not *may be*, I *know* there's somebody here; and I know there are people listening to me on television—who have failed the Lord. And you think perhaps God is finished with you. I want to tell you God is no more finished with you than God was finished with the children of Israel just because they sinned. God is the God of a second chance. Oh, God is the God of grace. God is a God of forgiveness. God is a God of beginning again. And I want to tell you that failures are not fatal, and failures are not final, as long as there's a God in heaven. He's a God who wants to give you another chance. And here in Joshua chapter 8, verse 1, we read where God said to Joshua, "Joshua, I'm giving you another chance; I'm giving you another day."

Do know you there are some people who have failed, and because they failed, they just simply quit? They just quit. And they're always going around moaning, groaning, talking about, "What a fool I was!" Why don't you change that? Why don't you say,

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"What a fool I am to keep saying, 'What a fool I was'"? Oh, listen, friend. The Bible says we are to forget *"those things which are behind"* (Philippians 3:13)—past guilt and past glory. Forget your success at Jericho, and your failure at Ai. Forget those things. There's a land out here to be conquered. And the same God who wants to give you a second chance will give you a second chance.

He gave Samson another chance, didn't He? Do you remember how Samson got his hair cut in the devil's barbershop? Lost his power, and yet Samson said, "O God, hear me one more time." And he was more victorious in his death than he was in his life. He gave Jacob a second chance. Do you remember when Jacob went to Bethel? There he met the Lord. He saw a ladder descending out of heaven. He made vows with God. And then later on, he got away from God and married adulterous, idolatrous women and so forth. And he got away from God. But the Bible says he went back to Bethel—back to Bethel. God gave him a second chance. Oh, listen. He gave John Mark a second chance. Paul said, "Ol' Mark, he's been a failure; he's been a deserter." And yet God gave him a second chance. And he wrote the Gospel of Mark. He gave Peter a second chance. Simon Peter cursed and swore and denied Christ. And yet Simon Peter was a great preacher on the day of Pentecost.

Aren't you glad that God is the God of a second chance? And I want to tell you right now that you bring your sin to Him: if you confess your sin, He will forgive your sin; He will give you a brand new start. And after you get this new start, you may serve Him better than ever, because you've learned a lesson. You've known the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, and now you're ready to serve the Lord with all the power that you never had before.

Let me give you a great verse. Turn to Lamentations chapter 3. Joyce and I were discussing this verse some this morning at breakfast. What a great verse it is! Lamentations chapter 3, verse 22—this might be your verse for today: *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."* (Lamentations 3:22–23)

Oh, aren't you glad that *"his compassions fail not"*? Aren't you glad that *"they are new every morning"*? Aren't you glad that, regardless of what happened yesterday, today *"is the day which the LORD hath made"*? (Psalm 118:24) Aren't you glad that He's the God of a second chance? Aren't you glad that He's the God of a fresh start? I'll tell you there's something about the nature and character of God I see in Joshua chapter 8, verse 1, and it is that the God who judges failure is also the God who is willing to forgive sin when it's confessed, repented of, repudiated, and put away. God will give us a second chance.

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II. The Wickedness That God Punishes

Now not only do I want you to see the waywardness that He pardons, but I also want you to see in this chapter the wickedness that He punishes—the wickedness that He punishes—because I want you to notice what happened to Ai. And I begin reading now in Joshua chapter 8 and verse 24 and 25: *"And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword. And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai."* (Joshua 8:24–25) They utterly destroyed all the inhabitants.

And what a stark contrast we have here! Not only is it God's nature to pardon sin; it is also God's nature to punish sin. There's no contradiction. If we confess our sin, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sin. But if we don't, He is faithful and just to judge our sin. We need to learn this about the nature of God: oh, both the goodness and the severity of God.

Sometimes men will preach the wrath of God, and sometimes a preacher will put on a pair of hobnail boots and he'll preach in excoriating terms about sin and judgment and damnation and hell and terror. Little children sit in a church and they just quake. People get a negative idea about God. Then, some other preacher will come with all sweetness and sugar and honey and syrup, and he'll just sort of spray lavender all over the congregation. And he'll talk about, "Oh, the goodness of God, and the gentleness of God." And people never see that God is a God of wrath and a God of judgment. And both are a terrible mistake.

Oh, we need to understand that on the one hand it is God's nature to pardon; but on the other hand, it is God's nature to punish if we refuse to be pardoned. Both the goodness and the severity of God we see here.

Now I know that some people think that what Joshua did to Ai was very severe. But I want you to remember that Joshua did not instigate this. Joshua was marching under command of the Lord. And I want you to know that he was coming against an ungodly, unspeakably immoral people. You cannot imagine how wicked the Canaanites were. Actually, what was happening here, God was performing surgery, removing a cancerous growth from the human race.

John Wilder has talked about the Amalekites. Now the Amalekites were part of these Canaanite people. I want you to listen to what he said about them: "The Amalekites delighted in oppressing weaker people. Their wars were wars of ambush against the weak, the aged, the helpless. They would wait until a neighbor's crops were ready for harvest, then they would invade his land, driving the herds before them. In war, the

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Amalekites were especially cruel. They tortured captives by hacking off limbs, knocking out teeth, and gouging out eyes. The women and the children they drove ahead of them as slaves. They burned cities, and destroyed objects of art, and things sacred to the people of the land. For hundreds of years, they harassed and plagued the people of God. And in their fights with Israel, they would mutilate the bodies of the captives. They would cut off parts of men while these men were still alive and hurl those pieces of flesh into the sky as they jeered at Israel's God."

Why, the book of Deuteronomy tells us that they were demon worshippers; they committed abominations, all sorts of horrible occult practices. They sacrificed their children to the fire gods—to Moloch, and other demon gods. They were a horrible, terrible people, and God gave them space to repent. God gave them time to repent; and they repented not, and judgment came. I want you to learn this about the nature of God: I want you to see the waywardness that He pardons, and the wickedness that He punishes. I want you to see both of those here in this eighth chapter of Joshua, because if you don't see both of them, you don't have a total picture of Almighty God. For God is a God both of goodness and severity, both of mercy and judgment.

III. The Will That God Permits

Now that brings us to the third point, which will be a little longer, and that is, not only the waywardness that God pardoned, and not only the wickedness that God punishes, but I want you to see the will that God permits—the will that God permits. What is the will that God permits? God allows a man to choose whether or not he will be blessed or cursed. God allows a man to choose whether or not he will be pardoned or punished.

Look in verse 30 of this same chapter. God is going to give to His people a grand object lesson now so they shall never forget it. Joshua chapter 8, verse 30: *"Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal…"*—every altar in the Old Testament built by a godly man is a picture of the cross of Jesus Christ—*"Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal. As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and*

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cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law…"—*"And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings…"*—just underscore that—*"the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."* (Joshua 8:30–35)

And now we come to the title of the message: "The Valley of Decision"—"The Valley of Decision." It is God's nature to pardon. It is God's nature to punish. It is God's nature to bless. It is God's nature to curse. And God gives every man a choice. God does not force His will upon anyone.

Let me give you the historical background and the geographical background. As the children of Israel kept heading toward the Mediterranean, coming up from the Jordan valley, they went first of all past Jericho, and then past Ai. And then, they came to a beautiful, beautiful valley—a place called Shechem. Those of you who have travelled in the Middle East, as we have been there, I don't think anybody goes to Israel without going to Shechem. That's where Jacob's well is. It's a beautiful valley. And in Shechem are two mountains. This valley runs east and west, and it runs from the Mediterranean down toward the Jordan valley. And on the north was Mount Ebal. And Mount Ebal, a big beautiful mountain, in a sense, but rocky and barren—nothing much wants to grow on Mount Ebal—it looks foreboding. And then, there's a valley of about five hundred yards of beautiful green verdant with a stream running through it. And then, on this side is another mountain, Mount Gerizim. Now Mount Gerizim is very fruitful—a beautiful, green, lush mountain. And a lot of vegetation grows on Mount Gerizim even to this day. And in between, there's a valley.

Now Mount Ebal is called in the Bible the mountain of cursing, and Mount Gerizim is called the mountain of blessing. God gave these two mountains as visual illustrations, knowing that the mountains would be there as long as the children of Israel were there. And every time they looked at these two mountains, it reminds them that God is the God who has given them a choice. God says, "I've set before you this day blessing and cursing. I've set before you this day death and life. (Deuteronomy 30:19) And you are in a valley of decision, and you can make the choice."

And so the Lord wanted to reinforce this so much that He just divided the people in half. He said, "I want half of you to go up here on Mount Ebal, the mountain of misery. And then, I want half of you to go up here on Mount Gerizim, the mountain of mercy." And then, Joshua said, "I'm going to be down here in the valley in between them." And he said, "I'm going to begin to read the law of the Lord as Moses gave it. I'm going to read both the blessings and the cursings; and as I read the blessings and the cursings, I want you to say *amen*."

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Now those mountains come down in terraces; they're almost like benches. It's one of the world's greatest natural amphitheaters. And these voices could be heard resounding all around that valley. It must have been some sight; it must have been something.

How would you like to try that? I'm going to try something. We didn't do this at eight, but let's try it. All right, I'm going to let you be Mount Ebal over here, right down the middle. All right now, you folks be the mountain of cursing. And I'm going to let you folks on the sunny side over here, I'm going to let you be the mountain of blessing. Okay, get your Bibles and turn to Deuteronomy 27. We're going to read exactly what happened, and I'm going to let you shout *amen*. You want to do it? Okay, let's do it.

All right now, turn to Deuteronomy chapter 27. We'll just pretend we're there. All right now, I want you to notice that Joshua is here in the valley, half the people upon one mountain, half on the other. You say, "What about me? I don't know which side I'm on." Well, you say *amen* both times then. And, choir, we'll just divide you in halves also. And I want you to notice now in Deuteronomy chapter 27. Now, let's begin in verse 13. You study the whole chapter when you get home, but we'll begin in verse 13. And when I read the curses, I want all of those of you on Mount Ebal to say *amen* right at the right place. I think you'll see the right place. And so, I'll begin reading, and when I kind of look at you and nod, I want you to say *amen* just as loudly as you can. All right, that's what they were supposed to do; it was supposed to just rumble all through the valley.

Now, let's see if we can impress our boys and girls today like they impressed those boys and girls back yonder, and those men and women. All right now, notice, beginning in Deuteronomy chapter 27, verse 13: *"And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali."* That's who you are, okay? *"And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say"*—"Amen." All right: *"Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say"*—"Amen." Oh, folks: *"all the people shall say"*—"Amen." They've got to hear you on the other mountain. *"Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say"*—"Amen." *"Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say"*—"Amen." (Deuteronomy 27:13–18) And that went right on; there are a lot of cursings, and we won't curse them anymore. Let's just go on and get some of the blessings, because I want to hear from Mount Gerizim. I'd a lot rather hear from Mount Gerizim than Mount Ebal. Thank you, folks, but listen: there are some blessings.

Now the word *amen* is not written in here, so you're going to have to know when to say *amen*. I'll just say, "All the people shall say…" Let's begin reading in chapter 28: *"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD*

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thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee,"—oh, think of just being run down by blessings. Isn't that wonderful? They shall—*"…overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field."* And all the people shall say—"Amen." *"Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep."* And all the people shall say—"Amen." *"Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store."* And all the people shall say—"Amen." *"Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways."* (Deuteronomy 28:1–7) And all the people shall say—"Amen."

Now you've just been back in ancient history: that's what happened there. And Joshua is down in the valley in between. Can you imagine what it must have been like? Can you imagine what a grand visual demonstration that God must have given that day? There he is with an altar representing the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; and there he is reading the Word of God; and there he is saying, "It is God's nature to pardon, and God's nature to punish. It is God's nature to bless, and it is God's nature to curse. And it all depends as to what you say *amen* to. It all depends as to what you say *amen* to. You can choose: it's up to you."

There is a valley of decision. And there is a mountain of misery, and there's a mountain of mercy. And you can have either one: it's up to you. You can be like Israel, or you can be like Ai: it's up to you. God loves you; but I tell you, God is a Holy God, and if your sin is not pardoned in Christ, it will be punished in hell. There's no in between. There is no alternative. Everybody must come to a valley of decision.

You say, "Well, I won't decide." You just decided, friend. You decided not to decide. And that was your decision. And it was a bad one. For Jesus said, *"He that is not with me is against me."* (Matthew 12:30) And so the minute a man says, "I won't decide," he decides against Christ. You cannot be neutral. You're in a valley of decision. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is there, and there is a mountain of mercy, and there's a mountain of misery. There is a mountain of blessing; there is a mountain of cursing. And it is God's nature to pardon, it is God's nature to punish, and it is God's nature to give you the choice, for He's not going to force it on you.

Now, let me give you some reasons you ought to choose the mount of mercy. Why, you say, "You don't need any reasons. Anybody with any sense would want to choose mercy." I'm glad you thought so; but, you know, there are some people, evidently, they just have trouble making a decision. Isn't it strange that people have trouble making

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decisions for the Lord? It's like, you know, when you get up and preach and beg people to come to Jesus, it's like begging a starving man to eat. That's what it's like. I mean, you have to preach, and you beg people to come to Jesus. Why wouldn't people want to come to Jesus?

I want to give you four reasons, if you're in the valley of decision—four reasons that you ought to decide, and that you ought to decide now for the Lord—four wonderful, glorious reasons.

A. Immediate Joy

The first reason is that if you decide for the Lord now, you can know immediate joy right now—immediate joy! I don't like presents that say, "Don't open till Christmas," do you? I mean, I like to get in right now. I don't even like to go to the store and order anything. I like to buy it and carry it out. You know, I just like it right now. And, you know, you don't have to wait. Christianity is not just the sweet by-and-by. Oh, in the glorious now. And now you can know the Lord Jesus Christ and all of His joy and all of His fullness.

You know, we tell people, "Get right with God: you may die." Say, folks, get right with God: you may live, amen? You may live, and you can live with the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, I'd want to be a Christian if there were no heaven and no hell. There are both, but just to know the Lord Jesus Christ in this life is so wonderful. So many people who don't know Him, they don't have joy. They may have things, but they don't have joy. They may have furnishings and finery; they may have cars and clothes; but if they don't have Jesus, they don't have joy.

William Jennings Bryan said many years ago, "Those who live for money spend the first half of their lives getting all they can from everybody else, and the last half of their lives trying to keep everybody else from getting what they've gotten away from them—and they find no pleasure in either half."

A newspaperman went to New York City, went into a hotel, and took his own life. And he left a note—a very brilliant man—and this is what he said: "No one is responsible for this except myself. I have run from house to house, from country to country, from wife to wife, in a vain endeavor to get away from myself. I have done what I have done because I am fed up with the necessity of inventing devices for getting through twenty-four hours a day." It's a shame he didn't know Jesus, isn't it?

Now, let me say, folks, incidentally, some of you are bored down her—and you don't know Jesus. You want to go to heaven? I tell you what: you'd be bored stiff in heaven if you don't know Jesus. Did you know that? If you want to go to heaven and live forever, you don't even know what to do on a rainy afternoon. Oh, listen. Without Jesus, there is no joy. You can know immediate joy right now. I wonder why people don't come to Jesus right away. Getting saved is not a penalty that you pay in order to go to heaven.

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It's not like taking bad medicine in order to get well.

When I was in seminary, we had a man come to speak to us, and this man's job was to answer letters for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. You know, Billy couldn't possibly answer all of the thousands—I suppose, millions—of letters that come to him, so he has people who are very good and godly people, and who work on his behalf, to answer some of his mail. And this man was telling about some of the letters that they'd received. He said one letter they received was the strangest letter. He said, "It was from a young man who was going to be a preacher—and this young man obviously had such a pure, clean, separated life—such a godly young man. He was engaged to a sweet, lovely, devoted, precious young lady. And they'd been going together for many years, and now they decided to get married, and their marriage was drawing close. And this man, who was so careful that he wouldn't want to do anything wrong—not anything wrong—wrote and said, 'Now, Mr. Graham, you might wonder what kind of a problem could people like us have. But,' he said, 'I have a real problem. There's a question I need an answer to.' He said, 'Should I kiss my wife before we're married?'" This advisor said, "I tried to answer that." He I said, "I looked for a scripture. I searched the Bible. I couldn't find a scripture." He said, "The best I could come up with was a line out of a song: 'Why do you wait, dear brother?'"

You know, that's the way I feel about people who are Christians: Why do they wait? Why do you have to beg people to come to Jesus? I mean, to know joy, and to know blessing. God says, "I set before you cursing and blessing." (Deuteronomy 30:19) Oh, don't be afraid of the Lord. The Bible says in Psalm 16, verse 11, *"At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."* (Psalm 16:11) Proverbs chapter 10 and verse 22: *"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."* (Proverbs 10:22) Do you know what that means? It means, oh, you have a good time being a Christian without a hangover. *"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."*

You know, there are some folks listening to me this morning who couldn't get to church because you're suffering the morning after the night before. Poor fellow! Listen. When I have a good time, I want to know about it, amen? I don't want to be stoned out of my mind, not knowing what's happening. Oh, *"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."*

B. **Impending Death**

Why should a man in the valley of decision say *yes* to Jesus Christ? Well, number one, he can know immediate joy. But now, let me paint in more somber tones. Number two, there may be impending death. You don't know when you're going to die.

I don't know when I'm going to die. This may be the last sermon I'll ever preach. Do

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you know what advice someone gave to preachers? Do you know what he said? He said that preachers ought to preach as though they were preaching as a dying man would preach to dying men—as a dying man would preach to dying men. I ought to preach as though this is the last sermon I'll ever preach. You ought to listen as though it's the last sermon you'll ever hear. You ought to decide today the decision you'd make if you would know you'd never get to the dinner table alive, because you don't know; I don't know. *"What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."* (James 4:14)

Over there in south Mississippi where I used to pastor a church when I was in seminary, seven people on the way home from church, their lives snuffed out—I said, on their way home from church! I remember there in Merritt Island, Florida, standing on the steps of the church with a precious saint of God, a member of our church—her name was Dorothy—shaking her hand. She looked at me with that precious smile and said, "See you tonight, pastor. What a blessing it was this morning!" But on the overpass there going over the river to Cocoa Beach, a head-on collision: Dorothy died, just like that! "See you tonight, pastor."

There are some of you who say, "We'll be back tonight." You may not—you may not! You may be killed going home from church. Listen. The Bible says, *"There is but a step between me and death.*" (1 Samuel 20:3) You say, "Brother Rogers, I think you're trying to frighten me." That's right, that's right: the man who is not afraid of death and doesn't know the Lord Jesus Christ is foolish—foolish!

Put your hand up there: that little heartbeat is all there is between some of you and eternal hell. Now, you think about that: That's all there is between some of you and eternal hell. I thank God between me and hell there's a cross, and Jesus is on it. Impending death—you'll never know: "There is but a step between me and death." *"What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"* —like the morning frost. Impending death.

C. **Imminent Return**

I want to give you a third reason if you're in the valley of decision—listen to me—not only immediate joy, not only impending death, but imminent return. I'm talking about the Second Coming of Jesus. He's coming suddenly, quickly—I don't know when. I may not get to finish this sermon. One of these days, the trumpet will sound; one of these days, Jesus will come. The Bible says—and you listen to the Word of the Lord—the Bible says, *"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."* (Matthew 24:44) Matthew 24, verse 44: *"Therefore be…ready."*

Are you ready? If this were your last moment, if Jesus Christ were to come right now, would the lot of Ebal or the lot of Gerizim be yours? The mountain of cursing or the

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mountain of blessing? The mountain of misery or the mountain of mercy? I'm telling you, Jesus Christ is coming, friend. That's no fairy tale. Just as certain, just as sure, as He came the first time, Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth. The time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is a sealed mystery known to God alone; but Christ may come at any moment.

And there's not one prophecy that needs to be fulfilled in this Bible before Jesus comes again. We are waiting right now. We're not even looking for the signs; we're listening for the shout. But I want to tell you something: There's one more sign that is becoming especially relevant in our day and our age. Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Lot, so will it be in the coming of the Son of man." (Luke 17:28)

Do you know what the days of Lot were? Days of homosexuality—Sodom! It was a day when homosexuality was blatant and rampant, and sin that used to slink down the back alley now strutted down the main street. The men of Sodom were bold in their sin, and God says, "As it was in the days of Lot, it's going to be in the last days when my Son comes back to this earth." And I believe that our God is speaking to us, and I believe that our God is warning us, and I believe that some of us who are in the valley of decision had better get out.

D. Increasing Hardness

Number one: immediate joy—you can know joy now. Number two: impending death—you may die at any moment. Number three: imminent return—Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth. And, number four: increasing hardness—every time you say *no* to Jesus Christ, it makes it that much harder for you to say *yes* to Jesus Christ. That's the reason the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 3, beginning in verse 7, *"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts."* (Hebrews 3:7–8)

Now, what does that mean? It means that the human heart can get hard. It means that when a man hears the gospel of Jesus Christ preached and he says *no* to Jesus Christ, every time he says *no* to Jesus Christ, it is harder the next time to say *yes* to Jesus Christ. That's the reason little children are easy to win to the Lord. Somebody says, "I don't believe in leading little children to Jesus." Friend, we ought, by all means and every availability, to win every child we can to Jesus Christ before their hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Oh, bring the little children to Jesus! Somebody doesn't have to have a Ph.D. degree in sin before he can get saved. When a child is old enough to know the difference between right and wrong, and when he's old enough to understand that Jesus Christ died on the cross for his sins, when he's old enough to trust Christ, we ought to bring the children to Christ.

But I want to tell you that some of you have heard the gospel for so long, and some

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of you have been pressurized and conned and talked to and gypped and lied to about everything, that you've built up such a sales resistance; that some of you are listening to me right now—and I daresay there are some of you listening to me on the television—who are saying, "What's his angle? What's his angle? Who is he? Elmer Gantry? What's he trying to con me into?" And you have become so cynical that you know the price of everything and the value of nothing. And even when a man is preaching the truth, you can't receive it, because your heart has become so hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

"Today, if you'll hear His voice," the Bible says, "harden not your hearts." (Hebrews 3:7–8) God loves you. The Lord wants to save you. But I want to tell you, one day your heart can get so hard that you will so insult the Holy Spirit that He won't speak to you any longer. The Bible says in Genesis chapter 6, verse 3, *"My spirit shall not always strive with man."* (Genesis 6:3) One day, He'll knock His last knock; one day, He'll speak His last voice; one day, He'll call His last call. And then, He won't speak to you anymore. And that's when the lights go out on the road to hell. Multitudes in the valley of decision!

Conclusion

What is the nature of God? Listen to me. The nature of God is to pardon sin. The nature of God is to punish sin. And the nature of God is to put man in the valley, and let him choose cursing or blessing; death, life; hell, heaven. You know, if I could make the choice for you, I would. God knows I've preached as best I know how. And I want to tell you on the authority of the Word of God that if you will come to Jesus Christ, that that altar represented there in the middle of that valley; if you will come to Jesus Christ, if you will trust Him, not only will He give you pardon to take away your guilt, but He'll give you power to live as you ought. And the way I know is because Jesus Christ has saved me.

And I just want to say again, if you're not a Christian, I'll just have to say what Billy Graham's advisor said to that young man: "Why do you wait, dear brother? Why?" Oh, God has put you in a valley—a mountain of mercy, and a mountain of misery—and you can go to the north or to the south. You can choose life, or you can choose death. Choose life. I beg you in the name of Jesus, with all of the unction and function of my soul, come to Jesus Christ, and do it today!

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The Day the Sun Stood Still

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 30, 1977 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 10:12–14

"Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."
JOSHUA 10:12

Outline

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I. The Historical Battle
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III. The Heavenly Battle
  A. The Truth Concerning the Word of God
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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, please, and turn to Joshua chapter 10—Joshua chapter 10—and we're continuing our journey with Joshua into Canaan. And I want you to remember that the book of Joshua is that Old Testament book that teaches New Testament victory, because the land of Canaan pictures and illustrates the life of victory for the Christian.

And so now in Joshua chapter 10, we're coming to this marvelous, wonderful story of the day the sun stood still. And that is the title of our message: "The Day the Sun Stood Still." And look in verse 12, if you will: *"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And*

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there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel." (Joshua 10:12–14)

Now there are some people who would have us to believe that the Bible is full of folklore, or what they call "myth." But they're mistaken, because that is not true. These stories are true—these stories are real. And I don't suppose that there's any story in all of the Bible that has been more abused, or perhaps, more ridiculed, than Joshua's long day, the day that God made the sun to stand still. And they say, "Ha, this story disproves the authenticity of the Bible." But in a very real way, and in a very strange and glorious way, it authenticates and ramifies and substantiates and underscores and embellishes the authenticity, the reliability, the infallibility, the factuality of the Word of God. And that's what we're going to see today as we study the story of the day that the sun stood still.

And, actually, we're going to hinge our thoughts on three battles—three battles.

I. The Historical Battle

The first battle that I want us to think about is the historical battle around which this event took place. It is very important that you see this historical battle, because a battle of great and significant and long-reaching proportions was about to take place.

Now, remember, God had already given to Israel Jericho. Jericho fell when the walls came a' tumbling down. And then, after they got their hearts right, God gave to them Ai. And we studied about Ai last week. And then, something happened: News got out in the entire land of Canaan what was taking place. And there were six kings, and these six kings and their powerful nations formed a league of nations. The devil's crowd decided they'd better get together. And so, the Hittite nation, and the Amorite nation, and the Canaanite nation, the Jebusite nation, and the Perezite nation, and the Hivite nation—you almost expect us to say, "and the termite nation"—all of the nations of the *-ites*, they all just got together, and they banded themselves together into a confederacy, a league of nations, to stand against Joshua and the onslaughts of his army.

Now, about this time, the Hivites, who were the closest to the advancing armies of Joshua, who lived in the city of Gibeon—and we'll call them the Gibeonites—these Hivites got together, and they planned a shrewd strategy. They thought that they could never beat the armies of Israel so they would just join them. And they knew that Israel would not take them in if Israel knew they were Canaanite nations, so they got some of their older men and put a disguise on these old men. They took ragged clothes and worn out shoes, and they took some wineskins that were all cracked and hardened, and filled them with some old rancid, fermented, soured wine. And they took some old moldy bread in their knapsacks, and they came straggling through, dust on their heads. And they came straggling into the camp of Israel, and they said, "We have been on a long

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journey from far away; we come from a far country; and we just need you to take us into your camp and to make a league with us." They wanted a league of peace.

And Joshua sought not *"counsel at the mouth of the LORD."* (Joshua 9:14) He just thought, "Well, it's obvious that these people have come from a far country. Just look at them! Look how worn out their shoes are! Look how ragged their clothes are!" And those men reached in their knapsack and brought out some bread and said, "When we left home, these were hot biscuits. Now, look at them." And you know ol' Joshua, why, he just fell for that; he bought it hook, line, and sinker. And he made a league with the Gibeonites. And he made a pact with them and said he would protect them. And he brought them into the camp of Israel. They were to be hewers of wood and carriers of water for the service of the Lord's house and so forth. But he didn't know he had made a promise to protect some people that he was supposed to be fighting. But he kept his word, anyway. You know, the Bible speaks of the character of a man who makes a vow to his own hurt, and yet he keeps it. (Psalm 15:4) And Joshua was at least that kind of a character.

Well, about this time, these five kings that are left under the head of a very crafty king, Adonizedec, find out what the Gibeonites have done. And they are incensed because the Gibeonites, they feel they double-crossed them. So they get ready to double-cross the double-crossers. It is cheat, cheating, cheat! And so they make up their mind that they are going to destroy the Gibeonites—the Hivites. And so they get ready to marshal their armies against the city of Gibeon. And when the Gibeonites hear that, they send a messenger to Joshua and say, "Look, you have made a promise that you're going to protect us; you made a league of peace with us. And these five kings have arrayed themselves against us. Now, you come and help us."

And Joshua, true to his word, sets a forced march, and in the middle of the night the soldiers of Israel begin a march fifteen miles over torturous terrain. And they strike with suddenness on these five kings who are not prepared for this; they don't know that Joshua is coming. And about that time, when the armies of Joshua descend upon these five kings, the Gibeonites make sort of a sortie, and come around from the other side. And the armies of the five kings are caught in what we would call in modern terminology a *pincer movement*. And they began to retreat. And the battle goes hot and furious and thick. And they retreat and retreat and retreat until the sun is at high noon, and the armies of the five kings are retreating down backward through a narrow pass. Joshua, being the general that he is, knows that he has the enemy just where he wants him. Joshua knows that this is a turning point in the battle, a very strategic point, but he knows that he needs more time.

And, by the way, you cannot imagine what a strategic battle this is, because this was really the beginning of the end for the Canaanites. And, you know, as the history of

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Canaan went, the history of the Jews went; and as the history of the Jews went, the destiny of the nations goes. And it was in this land of Canaan that the Savior was to be born.

God's plans, God's promises, God's prophecies—all of it are hinging on this particular battle. And so, right when Joshua says, "Oh, I wish I had more time; I have everything just like I want it," Joshua, by an impulse of the Holy Spirit, prophetically and prayerfully says, *"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."* (Joshua 10:12) And time seemed to freeze, and the sun stopped its coursing through the heavens, the moon stopped its setting there in the valley of Ajalon, and the day was extended, and God gave a mighty victory to His people.

II. The Philosophical Battle

Now, that, ladies and gentlemen, was the historical battle that was fought by soldiers. The second thing I want you to see is the philosophical battle. This one is fought by scholars. These are people who read the story and they say, "Bosh! Ridiculous! Absurd! It never happened; it is a later interpolation. Somebody, reading into it—some priestly redactor, some scribe, somebody a thousand years later—inserted this bit of absurdity into this piece of history. It is folklore, a myth."

But we beg to differ with these so-called, erstwhile scholars on several grounds. First, the first ground we want to argue, it's just simply on astronomical grounds. Did you know that astronomically, by studying the stars, the astronomers can prove the validity of what is taught here in the Word of God?

You know, it's quite remarkable that tucked away here there are certain facts that are given in this passage. I want you to notice them. First of all, I want you to notice the position of the sun on this particular day. Look in verse 13—the last part: *"So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven."* (Joshua 10:13) *"The midst"*: this word is the Hebrew *chatsi*, which means that the sun was right in the very zenith of the heavens. It's what we would call today high noon. And also, the sun, at this particular point, was right over the city of Gibeon. And, of course, we can take a map and plot the city of Gibeon on a map and tell exactly to what degree this city was set on the face of the globe.

Also, I want you to notice that the moon was in the valley of Ajalon—the end of verse 12: "*and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."* (Joshua 10:12) Now, this is what we would call today sort of a Gunsight Pass, and the moon is just sitting right there in the valley. It's about to touch the meridian of the earth; it's sitting there in the valley. The moon is in the valley; the sun is directly overhead. Now, of course, most of us are not astronomers, and we could not do this, but those who are astronomers tell us that this position is reached just once in each lunar cycle. And these people who can take a blending of astronomy and chronology can just roll back the days—just roll back the days. They get

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a starting point, and they just roll back the days, and they can tell you exactly on what day this day fell.

For example, the Chaldeans kept records of the lunar eclipses, which we can tell precisely when they took place. The Chaldeans took their records from those lunar eclipses. And if you take the Chaldean record and start counting forward, and by blending chronology and astronomy together, you come to July 22, on a Tuesday. But if you take modern records, and start going back from our records, you'll come again to July 22—but you'll come to a Wednesday.

Now, the important thing is that the day in the calendar month is exactly the same, but the day of the week is different. There's a day missing, somehow; there's a long day. And so they figured again the same thing: the day of the month is the same, but the day of the week is different. And God has written this miracle forever in the stars. Forever it is recorded in the heavens that sometime, somewhere, in the recorded history of mankind, there is a missing day, or what we would call an extra-long day.

"But," someone argues, "that's scientifically impossible. It's scientifically impossible from several viewpoints. Number one, Joshua said, *'Sun, stand thou still,'* and we know that the sun doesn't move; it's the earth that revolves. And so, if Joshua thought that the sun moves, he was wrong, because everybody knows the sun doesn't move." Well, I want to tell you, friend, the sun does move, and it moves at a tremendous rate of speed, and every star, and every galaxy, and every moon, and every earth, and every planet—all of them—are moving at the same time. Don't you know that? Everything is moving.

All of God's universe is in tremendous motion. The sun does move. And so, if you want to press that literally, you'll have no problem. But I want to tell you something: that the writer here is using language that would be common and would be commonly understood. When you go home tonight and watch the weather report, and that meteorologist, he tells you what time sunrise is, well, does the sun rise? Not really. The earth turns; but to us, we call it sunrise. And I think that's exactly the same kind of phenomenal language that the writer here of the book of Joshua is using. But don't you try to tell me, friend—regardless of how you try to tell me—that something is scientifically impossible.

Some people say, "Well, it's against the laws of nature." Well, a few weeks ago, we talked about the laws of nature. There is no such thing as the laws of nature; they are the laws of God. You see, *God does not operate according to the laws of nature; nature operates according to the laws of God.* Have you got that? Nature operates according to the laws of God. And how can you have a law anywhere? In order for anyone to have a law, first of all, there must be someone with enough power, enough authority, to make a law. And then, he must have enough power and enough authority to enforce the law, or else you don't have law.

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Now, are you trying to tell me that the God who has enough power to make a law, and the God who has enough power to enforce a law, doesn't have enough power to amend a law, rescind a law, or do away with the same law that He Himself has made? Are you trying to tell me that God Himself is the victim of His own laws? Are you trying to tell me that the man who can make a clock can't stop it? Are you trying to tell me that the God who made it all has suddenly lost control over it, and that the Creator has become a servant of the creature? Of course not! Absurd! And God, being God, can do anything He wants. And He doesn't even have to ask our permission, amen? I mean, I don't know what kind of a God you believe in, but we're talking about the God who made it all, to begin with. No, not only is it written in the very astronomical heavens, but it's also written in our hearts and in our spirits that the God that we serve is a great God.

Someone says, "Oh, but wait a minute—wait a minute! If such a thing really happened, it would have made an impact upon history. We would have other records other than the Bible." Well, we do, ladies and gentlemen. The Chinese have a legend of a long day. The Incas of Peru have such a story. The Aztecs of Mexico had such a record. There's a Babylonian record. There is a Persian legend. Herodotus, the great Greek historian, says that when the priests of Egypt showed him a record, there was a long day, twice the natural length.

Now, all of these stories, some of them are mixed with myth. And the Polynesians have a record, a myth, of a very long day. And even in modern times: modern astronomers have found that there's a record of a missing day. Sir Edwin Ball, the great British astronomer, found in his calculations that those twenty-four hours are missing out of solar time.

Professor C. A. Totten of Yale University tells a remarkable story. He tells of a fellow professor who had made the same discovery that Sir Edwin Ball made, that twenty-four hours are missing out of solar time, and this professor was trying to understand the mystery of it. And C. A. Totten, Professor Totten, said, "You ought to read the Bible." The man said, "I don't believe the Bible." He said, "Read it, anyway." So he began to read it, and he came to this story of Joshua's long day. He came back to Totten. And Totten said, "Has that convinced you?" He said, "No, that hasn't convinced me, because," he says, "the book of Joshua says that a day was missing, or there was an extra day, whichever way you look at it, but," he said, "according to my calculations, there's not a full day lost in Joshua's time, but," he said "there was only a portion of a day lost." He said, "I checked my figures, and in the time of Joshua, there were only twenty-three hours and twenty minutes lost, and so the Bible made a mistake of forty minutes. It's not the Word of God," said this professor.

C. A. Totten said, "Would you please keep reading, sir?" And he continued to read until he came to Isaiah chapter 38. And there's the story of Hezekiah who was about to

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die, and he prayed to God, and God relieved him of that necessity to die immediately. And Hezekiah said, "God, give me a sign." And God said, "I'll roll the sundial back fifteen degrees," which is forty minutes—forty minutes! When he found that, the professor closed his Bible and worshipped the Author of it, and said, "Lord, I believe"—"Lord, I believe." And the entire day: twenty-three hours and twenty minutes in the time of Joshua; forty minutes in the time of Hezekiah the king!

Oh, I know that blows some people's minds today. They say, "Oh, that's one reason I just can't believe the Bible: because it's full of all of these things that are so hard to believe—they're against known laws." Well, friend, there may be laws that you don't know. Did you ever think of that? Did you know that if you were to show a savage in the jungle a television, he would say, "It's a miracle"? We say, "It's not a miracle; it's something that happens according to known laws."

Let me just imagine a statement that might be read to your great-great-grandpappy, and see what he would think of it. Are you ready? "Now it came to pass in the days of Richard of the House of Nixon in the year of our Lord 1969 that three men called astronauts, which meaneth explorers of outer space, were commanded to travel to and explore the moon. They obeyed the command, and actually traveled through space and landed on the moon. And while they were there, they talked with a contrivance called a telephone to Richard of the House of Nixon, and this was witnessed at the same time by multitudes all over the world." What would your grandpappy say? He would say, "Absurd! Ridiculous! Impossible! It could not have happened—will never happen!" It did—didn't it?—according to laws that were not then discovered that are known to us.

Now, what I'm trying to say is, ladies and gentlemen, God can rescind, amend, set aside a law, or use a law that you or I know nothing of. And whether God did it by light and fractions, whether God slowed the earth down on its rotation, whether God just took His entire universe from A to Z, and just slowed everything down, who knows? Who cares? God did it, and that's it. That's it. God said that He did it.

III. The Heavenly Battle

And so, we have seen, number one, what we call the historical battle that was fought by soldiers. Secondly, we have seen the philosophical battle that's being fought by scholars. But I want you to see the heavenly battle that's being fought by the saints today. Because the Bible says that *"all these things happened unto them…for our admonition."* (1 Corinthians 10:11) They happened as examples for us. They happened for our encouragement, for our instruction, for our teaching.

And so, there are some great truths that you and I can learn today, and I want us to learn them. I want us to rejoice in them, because the book of Joshua is not just what God has done; it tells us of what God is doing, in a very strange and a very wonderful

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way. Like today, there is the heavenly battle of the saints. For the Bible says, just as Joshua in the Old Testament wrestled against those demon-inspired Canaanites, today, *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* (Ephesians 6:12) And there's a battle that is raging today in the heavens, in the high places. That's what it means: that we're in a battle against Satan.

And in our battle against Satan, there are four truths that I want us to study out of this passage.

A. The Truth Concerning the Word of God

First of all, this truth: the reliability and the authenticity of the Word of God. Beloved, the old book can be trusted—the old book can be trusted! And if the Bible says that the sun stood still, the sun stood still. *And I think that some of these preachers who believe it's their calling to critically examine the Bible ought to be examined themselves.* I believe that. God didn't call them to be editors; God called them to be newsboys, and to deliver the paper, and put it on the front steps and not on the roof. And the headlines ought to say "Jesus saves." We can trust the Bible; it is the Word of God.

Oh, there have been many enemies against this book—but it still stands. Century follows century—and there it stands. And empires rise and fall, and are forgotten—but there it stands. And dynasty succeeds dynasty—but there it stands. And kings are crowned and uncrowned—but there it stands. Despised and torn to pieces—yet it stands. And storms of hate swirl around it—but there it stands. And the atheist rails against it—but there it stands. And profane and prayerless punksters caricature it—but there it stands. The Word of God, unbelief abandons it—and yet there it stands. And thunderbolts of wrath smite it—but there it stands. And the flames are kindled about it—but there it stands. For the Bible says, *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."* (Psalm 119:89)

The Word of God—infallible, inerrant, reliable, applicable; trustworthy for you, for me, today. Say, do you love this book? Have you dived into this book? Have you learned how to mine your own gold and to dive for your own pearls? Have you learned to go into this book and gain strength for living? There is no way that you can be victorious in your Christian life without the Word of God. Oh, God told Joshua in the very beginning when he was to take the land of Canaan that his battle-axe was to be the Word of God—the Word of God. Do you love this book? Or do you just simply come on Sunday and get a little dose of it to last you through the week?

B. The Truth Concerning the Care of God for His Children

Oh, the first thing I want us to see: the reliability of the Word of God. The second thing I want us to see is not only the truth concerning the Word of God, but the truth

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concerning the care of God for His children. Look in verse 14: *"And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel."* (Joshua 10:14)

"Oh," you say, "I wish He'd fight for me." He will, if you'll let Him. You say, "Well, how do I get Him on my side?" That's just the secret. You don't get Him on your side; you get on His side. And the reason that God is not fighting for some folks is they've been trying too long to get Him on their side.

Do you remember when Joshua came up to Jericho to reconnoiter the city and he was out there looking over Jericho and he saw a man with a sword drawn? And Joshua claps his scabbard there, just ready to draw his own sword, and he looks at this man and says, *"Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"* And the man said, *"And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come."* (Joshua 5:13–14) What did he say to Joshua? He said to Joshua, "I haven't come to take sides; I've come to take over," amen?

Now, you see, God's not for you, and He's not for them. He's for Him. He's for God! God has a plan, and when we fall in line with God's plan, then God's going to fight for us. Do you want to learn how to be victorious? You find out which way God is headed and you join Him. You just join Him. Or find out what God's doing. And, by the way, how can you know what God is doing, if you don't know the Word of God, and if you don't walk in the Spirit of God? But, oh, God's care for His children: the Lord fought for Israel, and the Lord, ladies and gentlemen, will fight for you. I know that you've got some real battles, but God will fight for you. That doesn't mean there's nothing for you to do. Joshua had to fight, the Israelites had to fight, but God fought with them, and God fought for them.

C. The Truth Concerning the Power of God

Oh, there's another thing I want us to see: Not only the Word of God and its authenticity, and not only the care of God and its preciousness, but I want us to see the power of God—oh, the great power of God! Those people were still a little afraid, and so Joshua did something that was quite remarkable that day. Joshua took these five kings…

Now, the five kings, they were big generals, you know, so they sent everybody else to war, and they stayed back, you know.

I heard about some little boys playing war one time, and a man looked at one of them and said, "What are you boys doing?" He said, "We're playing war." He said, "Well, I don't see any fighting." He said, "Well, we're all generals."

You know, we've got a lot of generals in the church, don't we? You know, they want to tell everybody else how to do it, but they don't want to do it, you know. And these five kings, they had stayed back—well, they ended up holed up in a cave. And Joshua said,

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"Just roll a stone in front of that cave: we'll use those kings a little later." Joshua went ahead and mopped up, and then he came back and he gave everybody a wonderful object lesson.

And I want you to learn that object lesson. Look in Joshua chapter 10, beginning in verse 24: *"And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them…"*—and this is for you today, dear friend; this is for you in the hospital. I want you to listen to it. This is for you, sir, with all of your financial problems. I want you to listen to it—*"And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."* (Joshua 10:24–25) You know what he did? He drug those wicked kings, sniveling, out of that cave, thrust them on the ground, and he said to the men of Israel, "Now, come, put your feet right on their necks." There he is.

What's the significance of that? Have you ever read in the New Testament where the Bible says, *"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly"*? (Romans 16:20) Have you defeated him? When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, Jesus Christ said, *"Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."* (John 12:31) Satan just hopes you don't understand it. Satan hopes that you don't understand that it is your privilege to put your feet where Jesus has already put His, because "I'm in Christ, and He's in me." And, thank God, He causes me always to triumph—always to triumph! (2 Corinthians 2:14)

Have you learned that lesson? Oh, there is power—power to save, and power to guide, and power to keep! The power of God is displayed in this wonderful story. It doesn't mean that you're not going to have any troubles. It doesn't mean that you're not going to have any temptations. Why, you couldn't have victory unless you had opposition! *And God's plan for you is not the subtraction of problems from your life, but the addition of power to meet those problems*. Learn that. That's what Christianity is all about: He prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies—not in the absence, but in the presence—in the very midst—of our enemies. (Psalm 23:5) God gives us victory.

D. The Truth Concerning the Work of God

All right now, there's a last lesson that I want us to learn as we talk about the heavenly battle of the saints: Not only do we learn the lesson about the Word of God, and the lesson about the care of God for His people, and the lesson about the power of God, but I want us to learn the lesson about the work of God. Look again in verse 14—the

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

"No day like that before it or after it": what does that tell us? It tells us, ladies and gentlemen, that God is not going to stop the sun again. It tells us that God is not going to prolong time anymore; that God made the sun to stand still only once. Do you know what that means? It means this sun that's in your eyes right now is going to set. Jesus Christ said, *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."* (John 9:4) The night is coming. God's not going to stop that sun; it's going to set.

There's an old gospel song, a quartet number, that people used to sing. I used to hear it a long time ago. Brother Tommy, I know you know it:

Life's evening sun is sinking low,
A few more days, and I must go
To meet the deeds that I have done,
Where there will be no setting sun.
—WILLIAM M. GOLDEN

And I believe there's a message here for you. I believe that God is saying to anybody who might presume, "I stopped the sun once in Joshua's time, but I'm not going to do it again."

There was no day like it before it, no day after it, and what you do you'd better get done, ladies and gentlemen. I tell you, there are some folks who are listening to me: you're squandering your time, you're wasting your time, and the sun is setting on you. Even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, said, *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day."* God has given you a day now, a glorious day.

I want to tell you, there are multitudes in hell and in heaven who would give a million worlds like this one to have the opportunity that you have right now. Did you know that? Oh, the golden opportunities that are yours! When do you ever intend to start winning souls? When do you ever intend to start witnessing for Jesus?

"Must I go, and empty handed?"
Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him,
Must I empty handed go?
—CHARLES C. LUTHER

You say, "Brother Rogers, one of these days." I want to tell you, the sun is setting—the sun is setting! *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."*

Life's evening sun is sinking low,

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A few more days, and I must go
To meet the deeds that I have done,
Where there will be no setting sun.

Conclusion

An artist had some students and he was teaching these students to paint. And this particular evening they were trying to catch a sunset in all of its iridescent radiance and beauty. And so they were out there on a hillside by a farm and they were trying to catch the sun in this moment of glory, and the instructor was going from canvas to canvas and looking at the works. And he stood over the canvas of one young painter who was laboriously working on some detail, and the master artist said, "Son, what are you doing?" "Oh," he said, "I'm trying to get the shingles right on this barn." He said, "You're what?" He said, "I'm trying to get the shingles right on this barn." He said, "Son, look. The sun is setting—the sun is setting. It's going down. In a few moments, it will be gone. And there you are putting shingles on a barn." Remind you of anybody you know?

I'm looking at some folks: one of these days a lot of things you think are so important are not going to be so important. Those lawns, that car, those cars, that grade, those grades, all of these things that we think are so important.

Life's evening sun is sinking low,
A few more days, and I must go
To meet the deeds that I have done,
Where there will be no setting sun.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

If there's some money you intend to give, why don't you give it? If there's some praying you intend to do, why don't you pray it? If there's some witnessing you intend to do, why don't you witness? If there's a letter you need to write, why don't you write it? If there's a sin you need to confess, why don't you confess it? If there's a Savior that you need to receive, why don't you receive Him? The Bible says, *"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."* (Proverbs 27:1)

God is not going to make the time stand still for you or anybody else. There is the Word of God: it is true. There is the care of God: He watches over His own. There is the power of God: He's able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can ask or think. (Ephesians 3:20) But, friend, there's also the work of God—the work of God: *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."*

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When Time Stands Still

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 13, 1983 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 10:12-14

"And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day."
JOSHUA 10:13

Outline

Introduction
I. A Strategic Fight
II. A Scientific Fact
III. A Settled Faith

Introduction

The Book of Joshua chapter 10. We're going to mention today an episode that we looked at as we preached through the Book of Joshua, and I'm entitling the message today "When Time Stands Still"—"When Time Stands Still." I like to hear those pages flutter. That's a good sign that you have your Bible in your hand. Joshua chapter 10, verse 12: *"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said"*—that is, Joshua said—*"in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel"* (Joshua 10:12–14).

Now I would say that there's probably no story in the Bible, unless it's the story of Jonah and the whale, that is perhaps more caricatured, more lampooned, and more ridiculed by those who hate the Bible than the story of Joshua's long day, when according to the Bible, God just extended the day; that the sun, as it were, stood still in the midst of the heaven, and God gave an extra long day. And so some take this and they laugh at it, and they ridicule it, and they use it against those of us who believe the Bible. But to the contrary, I want to show you that it is a marvelous confirmation of the Word of God, and there's some sweet and blessed instruction and encouragement for

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our heart, and I pray for the heart of every one who is listening to me today.

Now I want you just to follow my thoughts along with me. So first of all, we're going to be talking about a strategic fight. And then secondly, we're going to be talking about a scientific fact. And then thirdly, we're going to be talking about a settled faith. Okay?

I. A Strategic Fight

Now there was this day a strategic fight. Now you know the Book of Joshua is a book of battles. And Joshua was a great general. God had given Joshua and the children of Israel the command to go and take the Promised Land, and of course they had to take that land by battle, by fight. And this particular battle took place after Israel had already won two very significant battles. First of all, they had won that battle at Jericho. You remember reading about that, where the walls came tumbling down. And then after they got right with God, they had defeated the people of Ai. And now it looks like they're going to just move through the land.

Well, there were six kings, six Canaanite kings there, who decided that they had better get together. They'd better get together in a league of nations. Now these six nations were: the Hittite Nation, the Amorite nation, the Canaanite nation, the Jebusite nation, the Perizzites, and Hivites. And you almost expect them to say "and the termites." And they were six of these nations. And they had a very shrewd leader who was over them, who called them together: a fellow by the name of Adonizedec. And Adonizedec called them all together and he said, "Now look. If we do not pool our efforts, Israel is going to run over us. And so we need to fight against them as one nation." And so they got together in a confederacy to fight against Joshua and his soldiers.

Now what they were going to do was to fortify Jerusalem and make that the place of their stand against Joshua and his army. But among this group were some people known as Gibeonites. They were actually part of the Hivite nation, the Gibeonites who lived in Gibeon. And between Joshua and Jerusalem was the city of Gibeon. Now Adonizedec was shrewd and crafty, and also dishonest and crooked. And so what he thought he would do is betray one nation that was in this league of six nations. What he thought he would do is let Joshua attack Gibeon, and waste all of his strength, and let the Gibeonites by themselves fight Joshua. And then after the Gibeonites had exhausted the strength of Joshua, then the other five kings were going to attack. That was a dirty thing to do because they were all to be for one, and one were to be for all.

Well, evidently, the Gibeonites had a spy listening to ole Adonizedec, and found out that they were to be the sacrificial lambs. They didn't like that at all. So they decided they'd better do something. So they put their minds to work, and they came up with a shrewd plan also. What they did is to get some frowsy-headed men, some men with long beards and kind of old and decrepit looking men, and they dressed these men up

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in ragged clothes and put worn-out shoes on them, and gave them an old knapsack and put some molded bread in that knapsack, gave them some wineskins, and in those wineskins they put some sour vinegar. And then these men made their way into the camp of Israel.

Now when Israel saw them coming, they didn't know who they were, what they were, what they wanted. They said, "Who are you? And what do you want?" "Oh," they said, "we've come from a long way off." They said, "We've been on the road for so long." They said, "We're worn and torn. We need help. And we want to come under the umbrella of your protection. We want to place ourselves in your care, and we want you to give to us a covenant of peace and show the mercy and the covenant of your God to us." "Well," they said, "how do we know that you're not some of these Canaanites that we're supposed to be driving out?" "Who—us? Well, look at us! Look at these clothes! Why, look at these old shoes! And look at that bread! Man, that was hot biscuits when we left home! And look, if you would, in that knapsack. You see that old sour wine? Why, we're from a long way off!"

And they bought it. They believed it. They said, "Well, all right. We'll sign a covenant with you. We'll protect you." And they signed a covenant, a solemn agreement, that they would protect these people that they were really getting ready to fight. They'd not known whom they'd signed this agreement with. Well now Adonizedec has learned that he's been outsmarted. Cheat has cheated cheat. And so now he says, "What must I do now? It used to be six against one. Now it's five against two. And now the odds have changed, and now Israel has 30,000 more fighting men on his side." Well, Adonizedec said, "I know what I'll do. We'll take the five kings and then we'll destroy Gibeon. Rather than letting them be a bumper zone, we'll just destroy them so we won't have to fight them and Joshua at the same time."

Now the people of Gibeon had their spy in the camp. They find out that Adonizedec is coming to destroy them. So they go back to Joshua and they say, "We're in trouble, and you've got to help us." He says, "What do you mean?" "Yes, we just want to tell you something. We're really Gibeonites. But wait a minute. You made a promise. You're going to protect us. We've got your word, and you can't break your word. Yes, we tricked you all right. But still, we're going to hold you to that covenant." And do you know what? Joshua said, "I'll keep the covenant. And I will protect you."

Now by this time, Adonizedec had come and had bivouacked, and was ready to attack Gibeon. Joshua, wanting to get the first blow, puts his people into a forced march, and they marched for 15 hours to get to the place of battle. Now the armies of the five kings are asleep. And Joshua strikes their left rear flank with all of his fury just as the sun is coming up. And they're turned to consternation. When they turn to fight Joshua, the people of Gibeon attack from the other direction and they attack the right front flank.

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And what has happened now is the five kings are caught in a vice, what the modern military men would call a pincer movement. And they're still studying the battles of Joshua today in military colleges. Joshua was a great strategist. And when these five kings found out what had happened, that they were being attacked from either side, they turned and they started to flee. And the battle that day was a fierce battle. But Joshua realized that momentum was on his side. He realized that he now had the upper hand. He realized that if he could push the battle, he could save many lives, and that he could get indeed a military superiority that he so desperately wanted at this time.

But he also realized that he didn't have all day. And he needed more time before the sun went down so he could fight in the daylight. And so he boldly, audaciously looks up into the sky, and he says, "Sun, be thou still! Moon, stand still!" And the Bible says, "And the sun hasted not to go down." A remarkable thing! It was a strategic battle. And in a very real sense, we could say that it was like the Battle of Waterloo, or like Dunkirk, or like so many, strategic battles. In a way, the history of Israel, where the prophets would be, and where the Bible would be written, and where Messiah would be born, and where Jesus would die, and in a sense, the history of the whole world, you could say, hinged on that one battle—a strategic fight.

II. A Scientific Fact

But secondly, I want you to notice what I'm going to call a scientific fact. There are those who laugh at this idea. They ridicule this story. They say, "Ah, no. Don't tell me that the sun stood still. I can't believe that." And they say they don't believe it for several reasons. And in the first place, they say that it's just very unscientific to talk about the sun standing still, for we live in a heliocentric solar system. That is, our solar system revolves around the sun; not as ancient people used to think that the sun revolved around the earth, but to the contrary. And so they say the language is wrong here for Joshua to say to the sun to stand still. If he wanted the day to be longer, he should have asked for the earth to stop rotating on its axis, because they say the sun doesn't move.

But I want to tell you, dear friend, the sun does move. And so does the moon. And so does the earth. And so do all of the planets and all of the stars. Our entire universe is moving rapidly at hundreds of thousands of miles an hour. We call it an exploding universe. The entire thing is moving.

Now it wasn't just the sun that was called upon that day, but also the moon. What God did is just call time out for the solar system, and God just said, "Freeze it! Hold it right there!" Don't shy away from this because you think that Joshua had the wrong idea about how the solar system works. Actually, the Hebrew word here for "stand still" is not even the word for "stand." It's the word for "be silent." What he's saying—he doesn't even use the word that literally means, "to stand still." And so you don't even have to

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say that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still. The point of the matter is that, however God did it, God extended that day.

But somebody says, "But wait a minute. Wait a minute. You're talking about slowing down the whole universe? Talking about controlling the solar system? That's against the laws of nature!" Friend, there are no laws of nature. They are the laws of God that nature must obey. Amen?

Now don't go talking about the laws of nature. The laws of God—these are God's laws. How can there be a law anyway? Well, in order for there to be a law, there has to be someone wise enough and strong enough to make a law. And furthermore, in order for there to be a law, there has to be someone wise enough and strong enough to enforce that law. Now if someone is wise enough and strong enough to make a law, and if someone is wise enough and strong enough to enforce a law, then that same person would of necessity be wise enough, strong enough, to amend that law, to rescind that law, or to change that law. You see, God is not the captive of his own laws. Dr. Lee said, "If a man can make a clock, surely he can stop it." Amen? Anybody who can make a clock could stop a clock. Anybody who can make a universe can certainly cause that universe to speed up, slow down, or stop it altogether, because He's God. I don't have any difficulty with God, you see, believing that God could do that.

Now suppose you're going on a trip to grandmother's house, and you're driving the car, and the kids say, "Daddy, I want to stop at Stuckey's." So you stop at Stuckey's. "Daddy, I want to stop at the Alligator Farm." So you stop at the Alligator Farm. "Daddy, I've got to stop and go to the restroom." So you stop and go to the restroom. And, "Daddy, *this*," and "Daddy, *that*." And after a while, you say, "We're not stopping any more. We're going to Grandma's house. That's it, kids. I have laid down the law." And so you're driving along, and then you look on the dashboard and that light comes on and says, no oil in the crankcase. Well then, what do you do? You pull in the service station. "But, Daddy, you said we were not going to stop any more." "I know it, but I'm the one that made the law, so therefore I'm the one can change the law." Right? You see? Right! I mean, after all, you're not going to burn up your engine, are you?

Now God is the One who has the power to make the rules. God is the One who has the power to enforce the rules. He's also the One who has the power to amend, rescind the rules, if He wants to. He's not a prisoner of His own laws. And so don't try to talk to me about this being against the laws of nature. They are the laws of God. They're God's laws, and God can do with them whatever He wants. And He can do it whenever He wants. And by the way, He doesn't have to ask our permission. Amen? All right.

But somebody else says, "But you know, if this had indeed happened, if indeed there was an extraordinarily long day, why, it would be recorded in other history." Well, it is. As a matter of fact, Joshua says it's in the Book of Jasher. Now Jasher was a man who

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took the epic poems of Israel and the great historic events, tradition tells us, and he recorded them. But not only that, if you read the Book of Habakkuk, when Habakkuk is talking to us about praising the Lord and getting our prayers answered in tough times, Habakkuk mentions this day when the sun and the moon stood still and God commanded them not to move.

But not only that, we have the records in other histories; other civilizations have records of this. As a matter of fact, a dear man, Dr. Harry Rimmer, has written a book, *The Harmony of Science and Scripture*, which is a wonderful book in which he gives us some of the other civilizations and other people who believed in and who had records of a long day. For example, he mentions that the Chinese have a legend of an extraordinarily long day. He goes on to mention that the Incas of Peru have the same legend of a long day. The Aztecs of Mexico have the same legend of a long day. The Babylonians have a legend of a long day. The Persians have a record of a long day. Heroditus, who was the famous Greek historian, tells of visiting with the Egyptians, and the Egyptian priest showed him in their chronicles and in their records the record of a long day. And all of these evidently must root back to some fact when indeed there was a long day, when God extraordinarily lengthened a day.

But not only these ancient legends, but in our so-called modern times, a noted astronomer, Sir Edwin Ball, studied the heavens, and he through his study of astronomy and chronology and the study of calendars said that somehow there is an unaccounted-for 24 hours. That is, he could not figure out this long day; that somehow in the history of the world there is an unaccounted-for day. As a matter of fact, you can take the calendars of the old Chaldeans, the Babylonians—and they kept good records—and measure this way; and take modern calendars, and measure this way; and you come to a gap. There is an extra day, a long day.

Dr. Rimmer cites a Professor O. A. Totten—T-o-t-t-e-n—of Yale University, who wrote a book on this subject. And Professor Totten told of another astronomer who came to him and said, “I can’t understand it, but there is a missing day that I cannot account for, an extraordinarily long day.” Totten, who knew the Bible, and who was a believer in our Lord, encouraged this astronomer to begin to read the Bible. He said, “I believe you’ll find your answer there if you’ll start in Genesis and continue to read. And when you think you found the answer, come to me.”

Well, this astronomer read and he came to this story in Joshua chapter 10, the story of the long day. But he came back to Professor Totten and said, “I do not believe the Bible. I disbelieve it, because I have done my calculations, and in the time of Joshua there was not an entire day missing, but only 23 hours and 20 minutes.” And Professor Totten was not shaken at all. He said, “Go back and read the story again.” And he read it, and it said, “about the length of a whole day.” “Well,” he said, “how do you account

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therefore for the other forty minutes? Because somehow there's a whole day missing if it all wasn't missing in Joshua's time."

He said, "Well, keep on reading." And he kept on reading until he got to Ezekiel 38, and there he read the story of King Hezekiah, who thought he was going to die, and he cried to God with great tears and said, "Lord, spare my life," and the Lord said, "I have seen your tears, I've heard your prayer, and I'm going to spare your life." He said, "Give me a sign." He said, "Go out and look at the sundial. I'm going to make it go backwards 10 degrees." You can't do that, can you? Of course not! But He made the sundial to go backward 10 degrees, which is, on our clocks, 40 minutes. And there's the entire 24 hours. And when that astronomer saw that, he laid down his Bible, and worshiped, and said, "Lord, I believe."

Now friend, we don't have to have astronomers, though, to prove to us the Bible is the Word of God. God says it. We accept it because God is a God of might and miracle, and the God who made the whole thing to begin with is the God who is able to slow it down, speed it up, or close it altogether. And one of these days He is going to shut the whole thing down. He's going to say, "Gentlemen, it's closing time." What I'm trying to say to you is this: that we serve a marvelously, wonderful God.

III. A Settled Faith

And so I see this as a strategic fight. I also see this as a scientific fact. But oh, let me give you something else that encourages me to have: a settled faith. This is just one more instance of the Bible being under attack when, dear friend, the Bible has weathered every attack. You know, the Bible says of itself, "The word of our Lord shall stand forever" (1 Peter 1:25). And that Hebrew word *stand* means, "it rises to stand." That is, it gets knocked down and it just keeps rising up again.

Someone has written these beautiful words. He's talking about the Word of God:

Century follows century—There it stands.
Empires rise and fall—There it stands.
Dynasty succeeds dynasty—There it stands.
Kings are crowned and uncrowned—There it stands.
Despised and torn to pieces—There it stands.
Storms of hate swirl about it—There it stands.
Atheists rail against it—There it stands.
Profane, prayerless punsters caricature it—There it stands.
Unbelief abandons it—There it stands.
Thunderbolts of wrath smite it—There it stands.
—A. Z. CONRAD

The Word of our Lord shall stand forever. Gentlemen, you can trust the old book.

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There are some today who are telling us we need to re-examine the Bible. Some of them are preachers. I think we ought to re-examine those preachers. Thank God for the Bible, the Word of God infallible, inerrant. We don't have to worry about trusting the Bible and what Joshua said happened. What the Bible says in the Book of Joshua happened that day, indeed, did happen. And what an encouragement this ought to be to our hearts!

You know, we have such a great God, a God who, if necessary, is going to move the whole universe to take care of His children. Look in the last part of verse 14. The Bible says, *"For the LORD fought for Israel"—"the LORD fought for Israel."* And I want you to see what Joshua felt about that. After the battle was over, Joshua called his commanders and chiefs together. Look in chapter 10, verse 24—a very interesting passage: *"And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua,"*—that is, these kings that have been defeated—*"that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near,"*—now watch this—*"put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them"* (Joshua 10:24).

Now can you imagine that? These mighty, arrogant kings that they'd been so fearful of—now here they are, ignominiously defeated, chained, dragged out, thrown on the ground, squirming on the ground. And Joshua has his captains to come by, and each one of them walks up and places his foot on the necks of each of these mighty kings. And then Joshua tells them why he wanted them to do this and what the lesson was. Look in verse 25: *"And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight"* (Joshua 10:25). Isn't that a wonderful, wonderful promise? *"Thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies."*

Conclusion

You know, the Bible says that the God of peace is going to bruise Satan under our feet (Romans 16:20). You see, the Bible says that Jesus Christ is raised. He is our Joshua. Did you know that Joshua is the Old Testament name for Jesus? Did you know that? And Joshua, in many ways, typifies Christ who gives us the victory. And Jesus, our Joshua, is ascended, the Book of Ephesians tells us, into the heavenlies (Ephesians 1:20). And the Bible says God *"hath put all things under his feet"* (Ephesians 1:22). Now the Bible says that we're seated with Him (Ephesians 2:6). Now if Jesus is ascended in the heavenlies, and He has all things under His feet, and we are seated with Him, then where are all things? Under our feet. Am I right about that? Nod your head. Look intelligent. Okay. Now look. I mean, look victorious. Listen. If all things are under his feet, and I'm in Him, all things are under my feet. And there's not an enemy that can

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stand against the child of God.

You say, “Now, Brother Rogers.” No, my friend, there is not an enemy that can stand against the child of God. The Bible says, “Thanks be unto God, who causes us always to triumph in Christ Jesus” (2 Corinthians 2:14). The Bible teaches that God has made us *“more than conquerors through him that loved us”* (Romans 8:37). You say, “You mean I’m not going to have any more trouble?” Friend, you’re going to be filled with trouble, but you’re going to be victorious in it and through it. God has called us to greater spiritual victory. I’m not talking here about physical victories. These things are but physical illustrations of the greater spiritual truths, the victories that we have in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember reading about Miss Bertha Smith, one of our Southern Baptist missionaries to China, premier missionaries to China. And Miss Bertha told about a missionary who went to the mission field, and she had so many obstacles to overcome. She felt that God had called her to the mission field, but there were all kinds of problems. She couldn’t learn the language. She didn’t like the people that she had to live with in the mission compound. She didn’t like the Chinese. She was lonely, wanting companionship. And she had physical ailments. She had five very definite, real problems. And she tried as best she could, but she just felt so defeated. She felt that she needed to come back to the United States. Miss Bertha said this missionary one day was studying on the victory that the Lord Jesus had given to her. And she read this story of these five kings and thought of her five problems. And she wrote those five problems out on a paper and put them on the ground. And one by one she went around and put her foot on each of those five problems and confessed the victory in the name of Jesus. She put her feet on the neck of those problems, and from that day on God turned her life around miraculously. Her health was restored. She was able to learn the language. She was able to make peace with those that she lived with. And I’ll not tell you the whole story, except to tell you, dear friend, that every one of us today need to look at our problems and see what our problems are, and in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, claim the victory.

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When Time Stands Still

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 8, 1989 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 10:12–14

"Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."
JOSHUA 10:12

Outline

Introduction
I. The Historical Battle
II. The Philosophical Battle
III. The Heavenly Battle
  A. The Providence of God
  B. The Power of God
  C. The Purpose of God
Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn in the Old Testament to the Book of Joshua, chapter 10? In a moment, we're going to read a remarkable story. The title of our message: "When Time Stands Still." Do you know there's a story in the Bible that is used by many to discredit the Word of God? They want to mock and laugh, and when they do, they take the story that I'm about to preach to you about, tonight, and they use this as the basis of their ridicule of the Word of God. It's the time that God stopped the sun and let Joshua get the job done. I want to read about it—Joshua chapter 10 and verse 12: *"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel"* (Joshua 10:12–14). That is the story: the sun stood still.

Perhaps no story has been more questioned and debated than this one, and the

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skeptics and the scorners have had a field day. But, I want to submit to you that this is a wonderful story to authenticate and corroborate the authenticity, the infallibility, and the inerrancy of the Word of God. I was reading Dr. Harry Remmer, who is a scholar of yesteryear and has done so much scholarship in this area. Many of the thoughts that I have I've learned from Dr. Remmer. But, I want you to notice at least three things as we look at this story. It's been a great blessing and encouragement to my heart.

I. The Historical Battle

First of all, I want you to notice what I'm going to call the "historical battle." There was a battle one day, and it was a very strategic battle. As a matter of fact, the purposes and the future of Israel were at stake in this battle. This was a battle, really, for the control of the land of Canaan—therefore, the future of the people of Israel; and, therefore, in a sense, it was tied to the production, the coming, of our Savior into the world, because the destiny of the Jews. And, therefore, the destiny of spiritual salvation, in many ways, hung upon the outcome of this strategic battle so long ago.

Now, let me give you the setting of the battle. There were six nations that had gathered themselves together to oppose God's people. These were the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Jebusites, the Perizzites, and the Hivites. And, all of them had a league together, and they were going to destroy the nation Israel. Now, this league had a wicked and a sinister king whose name was Adonizedec. And, he was a shrewd and a crafty man, and he didn't have much character about him. All he wanted to do was to win this battle and exterminate Israel. And so, what he did was this: he got five of the kingdoms together, and they said, "Let's kind of ditch the Hivites, and let's make a sacrificial lamb out of them. Their position there in Gibeon is sort of a buffer between us and the armies of Joshua; and so, let's just kind of withdraw from them and use them as a buffer—use them as a sacrificial lamb. And, in the meanwhile, we'll draw back and fortify Jerusalem, and that will be our strategy."

But, the Hivites got word of it. They realized they were in a vulnerable position, and so they decided they had better make a league with Joshua. And so, they knew that Joshua wouldn't trust them as they were, so they themselves became some schemers. And so, what they did was to get some old ragged clothes; they got some old moldy bread. And, they just disheveled themselves, and they kind of stumbled into the camp of Israel. And, they said, "Oh, please have mercy on us. We've come from a long way off, and we need somebody to show us hospitality, and to protect us, and make a league with us and make a covenant with us." And, they said, "Well, how do we know that you're not from around here somewhere? How do we know that you're not part of our enemy?" They said, "Part of your enemy? Why, look at this old, moldy bread. That was hot biscuits when we left home." They said, "Well, well, yes, you're probably all right."

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And so, Joshua and the people of Israel made a covenant with the Hivites and said, "We'll just protect you; we'll have a league with you."

Now, Adonizedec finds out that he has been double-crossed by the Hivites; and so, he decides now he's got to exterminate them, because he doesn't want them to be in league with Israel. And so, he gets the five kings together, and they're ready to move against the Hivites. And, when the Hivites find out about that, they send to Joshua for help. And, they said, "We're just kidding. We're really from around here. But, you made a league with us, now, and you've got to protect us from Adonizedec and these other kings." And so, the plot thickens, or sickens, or whatever you want to say happens. And so, Joshua says, "Now, where are these five kings now?" Well, they're over at Jerusalem, and they're fortifying themselves at Jerusalem. Joshua says, "I know what we'll do: we'll catch them by surprise." And, he gets his army—Joshua was a great general—and Joshua gets his army, and he begins a forced march 15 miles at nighttime. He's going to catch these opposing five kings asleep—and he does. And, he…what…actually, he gets them between the Hivities and himself, and they're in a pincher movement. And, he attacks them from both sides, and he routs them. And, the battle is in full sway, and Joshua is winning the battle.

But, the only problem now is that it looks like the sun is going to set and the day is going to be over before he can finish the battle. And so, he says, "I need more time. If I could just have the time, I could finish this thing. I could fix these men. I could fix these guys once and for all." And so, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he does a very bold thing: he talks to the sun because of the Lord telling him to do so. Notice again verse 12: *"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still"*—notice he spoke to the Lord before he spoke to the sun—*"stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon"* (Joshua 10:12). And, because of this, God gave the day and God gave the battle to Joshua. And, that's the historical battle—that's the historical battle.

II. The Philosophical Battle

Now, let me move and talk to you about the philosophical battle, because I want to tell you, dear friend, people have argued about this. They said, "Why, this is absolutely impossible!" And, here are some of the arguments they have against this episode in the Word of God.

Some people say, "Well, it's simply folklore; it's a myth." I'm like Dr. Havner—I believe they're "mythtaken." It is not a myth; it literally happened. And, one of the ways that we know it's not a myth is we have scientific evidence that it's not a myth. Now, it's interesting how God gives some scientific facts about this. For example, look, if you will,

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in verse 13: the Bible says, *"And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people [of Israel] had avenged themselves upon their enemies"*—*"until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies"*—now, notice what it says—*"Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still"*—now, watch this—*"in the midst of heaven"*—that is, it was high noon according to verse 13—*"in the [very] midst of heaven"* (Joshua 10:13). The word literally means "in the *half* of the heaven"; that is, it was high noon.

All right, and you'll notice also that the sun was right above a town called Gibeon. Notice in verse 12: *"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon"*—so the sun stood over Gibeon. All right, you're going to notice also that the moon was in a valley. Notice in verse 12—*"and [the] Moon, in the valley of Ajalon"* (Joshua 10:12). Now, I've been to this place many times. As a matter of fact, when I go to Israel, I enjoy going out here and seeing this exact spot. I want to visit this place and look there at Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon, and the valley of Ajalon is what we would call a "Gunsight Pass." You could just see—here's the sun up here, and here's the moon over there in that valley. Now, all of this is important because it all comes together.

Now, the scientists and the scholars have set the exact day of this battle, and here's how they've done it: they have taken the geography; they have taken the astronomy; and they have taken the chronology, and they have blended them together. And, they've asked themselves, "What day did all of this happen? When was the moon in the valley of Ajalon? When was the sun right over Gibeon? When did all of this happen?" And, they've put it on the calendar: they said it happened on July 22. But now, here's an interesting thing: that's July 22 according to our calendar. But, the ancient Babylonians kept records, and the ancient Babylonians, if we start with their calendar and we count forward to July 22, why, that comes on a Tuesday. But, if we start with our calendar and count backward, July 22 comes on a Wednesday. That is, that there is a… The day of the month is the same, but the day of the week seems to be different. There was a day missing in that week. Now, Dr. Remmer says this—and I quote: "No writer, without the inspiration or knowledge of modern astronomy, could have described the relative positions of the heavenly bodies by mere chance. It took an eyewitness. Enough for the fact that it is folklore, that it was something that was inserted into the story later on. Nobody could have done it by folklore. It had to take an eyewitness.

Well, others discount this story. They say, "Well, it's impossible because of the language that is used, because Joshua told the sun to stand still. And, evidentially, the people in that day must have believed scientifically wrong; they must have believed that the sun revolves around the Earth, rather than the Earth around the sun." No such thing! There are people who tell us that the sun doesn't move. It's the earth that moves around the sun. But, my dear friend, may I tell you that the sun does move, and the earth does

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move, and the moon does move, and all of the stars move, and everything in this solar system is moving at fantastic speed through space? When God said, "Sun, stand still," He also said, "Moon, stand still." And somehow, some way, God just simply froze a moment in time. God just said, "Everything, hold it right there!" Now, even today we talk about sunrise and sunset. And, when our astronomers and our space scientists talk about how many sunrises that they see, and so forth, in a space capsule, we know that they're using phenomenal language as it appears. Nobody today or then had any reasonably…by divine inspiration that the sun circled the Earth. But, my dear friend, this language here just simply says that God said, "Sun, moon, that's it! Just hold still!" (Joshua 10:12). And, God froze things as they were for that day.

Now, there are others who say, "But now, wait a minute—wait a minute. You're talking about God making the sun to stand still and God making the moon to stand still. Don't you know that would just throw everything out of kilter? Don't you know that would just upset the whole universe? Don't you know that is impossible because it goes against the law of nature?" My friend, may I tell you *there are no laws of nature, only laws of God that nature obeys.* There are not laws of nature; they are laws of God. God made these laws. Now, there can never be a law until there is someone strong enough to make a law and has enough power to enforce that law. You have to have the authority to make the law and the power to enforce the law before there can be a law. Now, any body who has enough power to make a law, any body who has enough authority to enforce a law, it stands to reason has the same power to amend or rescind the law, amen? Do you think that God is a prisoner of His own laws? I mean, the God who created it all—do you think, now, God has been taken captive by His own laws? Dr. Robert G. Lee that Gene Howard just spoke of a little while back said something about this. He said, "Any man who has enough sense to make a clock certainly has enough sense to stop it"—"any one who has enough sense to make a clock has enough sense to stop it." The thing created cannot master its creator.

Now, you say, "Well, I don't understand it." Well, congratulations—I don't either. *I wouldn't have any confidence in a God you or I could understand.* You see, listen, the God who made it all can do anything with it He wants to, whenever He wants to do it. There are many higher laws that we may not understand.

Television is a miracle to a savage in the jungle. If you were to try to explain television to a savage, he wouldn't understand you. And yet, if he'd never seen television, didn't know electronics, and tele-transmission—but that's nothing to us today. It can be explained by modern scientific laws. We were—most of us were—alive when man first walked on the moon. But, can you imagine your great-great-grandfather listening to a statement like this: "Now, it came to pass in the days of Richard of Nixon, Richard of the house of Nixon, in the year of our Lord 1969, that three men called

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'astronauts,' which means 'the explorers of outer space,' were commanded to travel to and explore the moon. They obeyed the command and actually traveled through space and landed on the moon. And, while they were on the moon, they talked to the President back on Earth, to Richard of the house of Nixon. And, at the same time, this event was witnessed by people around the world"? Now, I tell you, if you told that to your great-great-grandpappy, he'd say, "Get the butterfly nets and carry them off." Isn't that right? He'd say, "No way! That is literally impossible."

Now, be careful when you say that something is impossible, especially when you're dealing with God. I'm telling you again, dear friend, any body who can make a clock can stop a clock. Any One who made this great universe can do anything He wants with it.

Well, somebody else says, "But, wait a minute—wait a minute. If there had been a time when the sun stood still—if there had been a long day—then we would have had it recorded in history." Well, may I tell you this: that the Chinese have a legend of a long day? The Incas of Peru have in their history a recording of a long day. The Aztecs of Mexico have a legend of a long day. The ancient Babylonians have a legend of a long day. The ancient Persians have a legend of a long day. Herodotus, the great Greek historian, says that the priests of Egypt showed him a record of a long day twice the natural length. "Well," you say, "all of those are pagan stories." Yes—yes. But, what I'm trying to say is that there seems to be such a universal, residual memory of such a day that somewhere in history it happened, and what we have in the Bible is the reason that it happened and the literal example of how it happened.

In our more recent, modern times, there was an astronomer named Sir Edwin Ball. He was a British astronomer. And, as he studied astronomy, he said there are 24 hours that are missing out of the solar system. There was another professor, C. A. Totten of Yale University, and he wrote of a professor—a fellow professor—who had made the same discovery. This fellow professor had said, "There's a day missing somewhere in the universe. We…I can't figure it out." Well, C. A. Totten was a Bible believer, and he challenged this professor. He said, "You say that you don't believe the Bible, but," he said, "I want to challenge you to begin in the Bible and start reading and see if you can unlock the mystery of that missing day." This man read, and he read. And finally, he came to the story of the long day of Joshua, and he said, "Well, that's interesting." But, he said, "I checked my figures, and at the time of Joshua there was only 23 hours and 20 minutes lost." He said, "If the Bible is correct, then how do you explain the mistake of 40 minutes that are not in my records?" C. A. Totten of Yale said, "Just keep on reading the Bible." And, this professor continued to read, and he said, "Well, yes, it's true. Joshua doesn't say that it was a whole day. He says, *'About a whole day'*" (Joshua 10:13). That's what the Bible says: *"About a whole day"* (Joshua 10:13). And so, he said, "Keep on reading." And, this professor came to Isaiah chapter 38, and he read

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there in Isaiah chapter 38 where King Hezekiah prayed and said, “God, give me a sign that I’ll live and not die” (Isaiah 38:22). And, God made the sundial to go back ten degrees on the sundial, which was 40 minutes. And, when that man read that—when the astronomer read that—he laid down his Bible, bowed his head, and said, “Lord, I believe.”

Now, what I’m trying to say is, dear friend, it’s an incredible book that we have here. And, you find a record—you find a record—in history of so many, many ancient people, and then you find a record today of modern astronomers who say there are 24 hours that are missing. How do you explain it? It’s explained right here in Joshua chapter 10.

III. The Heavenly Battle

Now, I’ve talked to you about the historical battle; I’ve talked to you about the philosophical battle. Now, let me talk to you about the heavenly battle.

What was God up to? I mean, why did God do this? I believe He did it. Well, first of all, may I say to you, dear friend, that you can be assured that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The old book can be trusted. And, as I said a few weeks ago, some of these preachers who think we ought to reexamine the Bible—I think we ought to reexamine those preachers. Somebody wrote these words: “Century follows century”—and he’s talking about the Bible now—“Century follows century, and there it stands. Empires rise and fall and are forgotten, but there it stands”—that is, the Bible—“Dynasty succeeds dynasty; there it stands. Kings are crowned and uncrowned; there it stands. Despised and torn to pieces—there it stands. Storms of hate swirl about it; there it stands. Atheists rail against it; there it stands. Profane, prayer-less punsters caricature it; there it stands. Unbelief abandons it; there it stands. Thunderbolts of wrath smite it; there it stands. The flames are kindled about it; there it stands.” Friend, we can trust the Word of God.

And, this story tells me several things, and I want you to write them upon your heart. Let’s see if we can apply it to those of us who live today.

A. The Providence of God

First thing it tells me—it tells me something of the providence of God, the care of God for His people. Notice, if you will, in verse 14: *“And there was no day like [it]”—“there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel”* (Joshua 10:14). Oh, thank God for that! God fights for us, and He fights for us today. And, God hears our prayer. Now, God may not stop the sun for us, but there’s nothing too hard for God. May God forgive our fears. And, when we see the providence of God, the great care of God for His children… The God who made the sun to stand still is the God who watches over you.

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B. The Power of God

But, not only do you see the providence of God; oh, my dear friend, you see the mighty power of God over our enemies. Go on down to chapter 10 and verse 24; look at this: the Bible says, *"And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom [you] fight"* (Joshua 10:24–25). And, my dear friend, we need to do the same thing today: we need to put the foot of faith on the neck of our enemy and realize that our God does, is, will, shall give us victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The Purpose of God

So, I see the providence of God: God fights for His people. I see the power of God, as these malevolent and wicked kings are subdued. And, I see something, dear friend, of the great purpose of God. Look again, if you will, in verse 14—look at it: the Bible says, *"There was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man"* (Joshua 10:14). God only stopped the sun one time. This is not a regular occurrence. Now, what does that teach us? That teaches us, dear friend, that time is fleeting away. God made the sun to stand still only once. Jesus said in John chapter 9 and verse 4: *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: [for] the night cometh, when no man can work"* (John 9:4). May I tell you, dear friend, in life, sun is setting for you? And, in life, the sun is setting for me. I don't know how many days I have left to preach the gospel. I don't know how many days I have left to serve the Lord Jesus. They used to sing an old song:

Life's evening sun is sinking low,
A few more days, and I must go
To meet the deeds that I have done,
Where there will be no setting sun.
—WILLIAM M. GOLDEN

Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And, let me tell you, dear friend, that the God who stopped the sun in its course is the God who sent His darling Son, the Lord Jesus, the S-O-N—the Son—of God to die on the cross for you. To stop the sun in its course gave God no difficulty. But oh, when Jesus died, He suffered in agony and blood, that you might be saved.

And, if you're not saved, you need to be saved. You want to be saved. Let me help

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you to be saved. You're not saved by joining a church. You're not saved by getting baptized. You're saved by trusting Jesus Christ. And, if you want to trust Jesus, let me help you to do it right now, right where you are. Just get your heart quiet. Forget that any one else is here right now. I'm going to help you tonight to be saved. You can be saved this moment where you are, in that seat, if you'll pray a prayer like this and mean it: "O God"—just pray it out of your heart—"O God"—that's right; just talk to Him—"Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus"—would you tell Him that?—"I do trust You, Jesus, right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus"—would you pray that?—"Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. I turn from my sin. I open my heart. I receive You now as my Lord and as my Savior. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for saving me. I don't ask for any feeling. I stand upon Your Word. Thank You for saving me. I receive it by faith like a little child, and that settles it. And now, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. I will live for You, and I'll not be ashamed of You if You'll only help me. In Your name I pray. Amen."

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Give Me This Mountain

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 13, 1977 Time: 00AM

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 14:6-12

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

Outline

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Introduction

We want to know all we can, so open your Bibles, please, to Joshua chapter 14—Joshua chapter 14. We're on a journey with Joshua, conquering Canaan. And, remember that Canaan represents the land of victory. The Book of Joshua is the Old Testament book that speaks of the New Testament Christian victory in Christ. Joshua chapter 14, beginning in verse 6: *"Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadeshbarnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God. And Moses sware on that day, saying,*

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Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God. And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old." That is, I am 85 years old. *"As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day"* (Joshua 14:6–12). And, that is our text: *"Now therefore give me this mountain."* I want to speak on this subject: "Give Me This Mountain"—"Give Me This Mountain."

Did you know so many Christians today are earning a living while they're wasting and losing their lives? They are drawing their breath, and drawing their salary, but they're living defeated lives, because they have unsurrendered wills, and they have never dreamed that God has not meant for them to live in the valley of depression, but God has meant for them to live in the high mountaintop of victory. We are to be living in the sunlit peaks of glory on the mountain that our God has given to us. Caleb was that kind of a man. He was the first spiritual mountaineer I believe that the Bible mentions. And, I want us to learn some wonderful lessons from the life of Caleb.

Now, I want just to review with you for just a moment, so you understand where we are, because it may be that some of you are hearing the messages on Joshua for the first time. And, I remind you that the Book of Joshua is more than history; it is an illustration of the victory that a New Testament Christian is to have. The Bible says: *"Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition"* (1 Corinthians 10:11). And, what does the land of Canaan that they were conquering—what does that represent? It represents the land of victory, and the land of rest, for the Christian.

A. **The Promised Land Meant Release**

You see, the Promised Land represents the victorious Christian life. Let me illustrate that. It meant release for them. Up until this time, they'd been a nation of slaves. Aren't you tired of being the devil's slave? He says, "Jump," and you say, "How high?" Oh, don't you want to be set free? Don't you want it to be said that, *"sin shall not have dominion over you"* (Romans 6:14).

B. **The Promised Land Meant Rest**

But, not only did it mean release; it meant rest. Up until this time, they'd been wandering round and round in the desert, over the burning, blistering, broiling desert floor. And now, they enter into a land that the Bible says was a land of rest.

Oh, I see so many Christians who have everything but rest. They are so nervous,

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they are so frustrated; they don't know what to do. They remind me of a deep-sea diver who got a message on his headphones, "Come up quickly, the ship is sinking." They don't know what to do. They're just frustrated. Oh, we're supposed to rest in the Lord Jesus Christ and *frustration* is not to be a word in the Christian's vocabulary.

C. The Promised Land Meant Refreshment

But, not only did this land mean release, and rest; it meant refreshment. Up until this time, they been on a desert dive, but now they enter into the land of Canaan, milk and honey, figs and grapes, and pomegranates and corn, and wine—oh, refreshment.

D. The Promised Land Meant Reality

And, not only did it mean release, and rest, and refreshment; it meant reality. Up until this time, they just heard sermons about Canaan, and that was all; and now they saw it for themselves.

Do you know the desire of my heart this morning? Oh, do you know what I want this morning? I want this congregation of people somehow to get this message out of their notebooks and into their hearts. Oh, I want you to experience victory. It would be wonderful for me this morning, if this would become more than a sermon, if it would become reality to you, and you would enter into your spiritual Canaan, the victorious Christian life that God has for you.

Well, whom does Joshua represent? Joshua, who led them in that day, is an illustration and a type of Jesus. That is the Old Testament name for Jesus—is Joshua; and Joshua represents Christ, who leads us into the land of victory. And, Caleb, who does he represent? Well, we'll let Caleb represent you, all right? Caleb, representing the Christian about to conquer his Canaan, about to possess his possessions, about to receive the promises that God has given to him.

I. Caleb's Character

And so, we'll notice several things about Caleb this morning and the first thing I want you to notice is Caleb's character. Look here in Joshua chapter 14 and notice these verses. First of all, the last part of verse 8, Caleb is speaking, and he says, *"But I wholly followed the LORD my God"* (Joshua 14:8). Look at the last part of verse 9: *"because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God"* (Joshua 14:9). And then, I want you to notice the last part of verse 14: *"because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel"* (Joshua 14:14). Three times God said it. Caleb was an unusual man. Caleb was a man who gave God all that there was of him—every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber; all there was of Caleb he had given to the Lord. He had wholly followed the Lord his God.

I wonder how many in this congregation could say that this morning? "I have given

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everything to Jesus Christ. I am committed 100% to God." "Oh," you say, "well, God doesn't expect that of me, because I'm just a layman." That's where you are 100% wrong, mister. God deserves everything you've got. And, if you haven't given God everything, you're a disgrace to the name Christian. I mean, everything is to belong to the Lord God, and you ought to say, "With all that is in me, I want to wholly follow the Lord my God." Halfhearted religion will not do it. The halfhearted will be the faint-hearted, and they will never conquer their Canaan. The Apostle Paul said, *"This one thing I do"* (Philippians 3:13). And, that's what made him a great man.

I spoke last week about Dwight L. Moody, a great evangelist. And, I talked about how he had a deeper experience with the Lord when some were praying for him. But, I want to tell you about another epic in the life of Dwight L. Moody that he said was one of the turning points in his ministry. Moody, first of all, started out as a shoe clerk, and then he became a Sunday School teacher. And then, he became a mighty evangelist. He went to England one time and came back, but he didn't have that much power in his life until he went the second time. And, when he was in England the second time, he heard a preacher preach in a field, an evangelist preaching in an outdoor meeting. The evangelist's name was Henry Varley. And, here is what Henry Varley had to say—he said, "The world has yet to see what God can do in and through and with and for a man wholly committed to him." Let me say that again. Varley said, "The world has yet to see what God can do in and through and with and for a man wholly committed to him." Dwight L. Moody, when he heard that, said, "By the grace of God, I will be that man. I want to be wholly, completely dedicated to him." And, God took this relatively unlettered, uncultured, untrained shoe clerk, and used him to shake two continents for God. Wholly, completely dedicated to Him.

Say, is that your ambition? Is it really? Or do you just come here and sit in church on Sunday morning and think you've done God a favor? Well, God is not impressed with your church attendance. God is not impressed when you come and tip your hat to Him. I'm telling you that Almighty God will be satisfied with nothing less than a total commitment to Him. Have you made that? If not, why not? Jesus Christ did not bathe this world in His blood to have you serve the world, the flesh, and the devil. You belong to Jesus Christ; you're not your own; you're bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). What we could do with a congregation of Calebs who would wholly, completely, totally, give themselves to Almighty God! Are you willing to do that? Wouldn't you like to see what the world could do with a church full of people completely dedicated to God—much less, one. What God could do, rather, with a church full of people completely dedicated to Him? This is Caleb's character.

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II. Caleb's Confidence

Now, the second thing I want you to notice is Caleb's confidence, because, you see, Caleb's character led to Caleb's confidence. Caleb was a man who had confidence in the Word of God. I want you to notice how the phrase "the Lord said," or something like that, runs through this passage of Scripture. Look in chapter 14 and verse 6, the last part: *"Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said…"* (Joshua 14:6). Now, Caleb is speaking, and he says, "You remember what God said." Just underscore *"the thing that the LORD said."* Look in the first part of verse 10: *"And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said"* (Joshua 14:10). Just underscore *"as he said."* Then, look in the last part of verse 10: *"The LORD spake this word unto Moses"* (Joshua 14:10). Underscore *"the LORD spake."* And then, notice again, if you will, in verse 12: *"Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake"* (Joshua 14:12). Just underscore *"the LORD spake."* And then, look in the last part of verse 12 again: *"as the LORD said"* (Joshua 14:12). Do you see it? Over and over again, God said, "The Lord spake." God promised.

Do you know where Caleb's confidence was? Caleb's confidence was in the Word of God. Caleb's battle-ax was the Word of God. Caleb had a mountain he needed to conquer. God had given him that mountain. And, I want you to know, as he went up that mountain with the sword in his hand, he also went up that mountain with the title deed in his pocket, because God had already given it to him. The Lord had promised it to him. And, his confidence came out of the Word of God. Ladies and gentlemen, listen to me: *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).

The Bible says, *"[the Lord] hath said…so that we may boldly say"* (Hebrews 13:5–6). You'd better take God's Word, soak your soul in it, saturate yourself with it, hide God's Word in your heart, so you can say, "God has said." Do you know what God has said in this book? Do you understand the great eternal rock-ribbed promises of this book? Do you know them? Do you know what made Caleb such a great man? Caleb believed the Word of God. And, do you want me to tell you why Caleb believed the Word of God? Because his heart was pure, and *a* pure heart *is the* fertile soil *upon which the* seed *of* God's Word *can find* root.

The reason that the Word of God doesn't mean something to some people, the reason that some people can sit in a congregation like this when the Word of God is preached and it just rolls off of them: they're sitting out there trying to figure up some business deal, while the preacher is preaching. They're wondering what are we going to have for dinner today. They're wondering whose going to win the professional football game this afternoon. And, their mind is a thousand miles away. They are not hungry for God; they don't want God. But, here was Caleb, a man whose heart was 100% out for God. He wholly followed the Lord his God. And therefore, the Word of God could find

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lodging in his heart. And, Caleb had a faith in God that some of us need today. Caleb's character led to Caleb's confidence.

III. Caleb's Courage

And now, the next thing I want you to notice is Caleb's courage, because Caleb's confidence led to Caleb's courage. You see, you'll never be bold—you'll never have courage, you'll never do valiantly—until you have a pure heart, and you've hidden the Word of God in your heart. But, when that happens, then you're going to have the kind of a courage that God wants you to have.

You see, Caleb, before he could take that mountain that God had promised him—and it was a glorious mountain. I mean, Hebron is the richest place. I've been there. Oh, you can see the vineyards today. It was that place where, when Caleb and the spies went over, they came carrying out of Hebron a bunch of grapes that took two to carry on a pole. Why, it was a land that flowed with milk and honey, corn and wine, grapes, figs, pomegranates—all of it there. It was a rich land. But, there were some adversaries. And, I want you to know, ladies and gentlemen, that nothing great is ever done in a rocking chair. If you're looking for a cheap way—an easy way, a lazy way—to be victorious, forget it. Caleb had some opposition that he had to overcome. But, I want you to know that the door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition, and God has planned it that way. There's a great effectual door opened unto us, but there are many adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:9).

A. He Had to Overcome Grasshoppers

I want you to notice some of the adversaries that Caleb had to overcome through his courage. In the first place, he had to overcome grasshoppers. Look in verses 7 and 8—chapter 14, verses 7 and 8. Caleb remembers back 45 years ago, when he first went in to spy out the land, and he says, *"Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart."* That is, "I brought back a good report." *"Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt"* (Joshua 14:7–8). Well, how did they make the heart of the people melt? I'll tell you how they did it. This is what they said, when they came back, and we find this in Numbers chapter 13 and verse 33. Here's what the other ten men said when they came back—they said: *"And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight"* (Numbers 13:33). Caleb's comrades had a grasshopper complex.

And, do you know what's wrong with so many people? Some of you are sitting right there—you've got a grasshopper complex. Do you know what you're thinking when I'm

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preaching? You think I'm so totally unrelated; I'm completely out of it. "He doesn't even know what he's talking about. Talking about giving everything to God, talking about why he'd have me be a religious fanatic. Nobody can live that way." And, you just think this is preaching that we come and listen to. You know, we just pay our duties; we just come and listen to that preaching. But, you have no more intention of putting into practice what I'm preaching than you have of putting into practice what you see on television; it's just sort of something that you do.

You are like a grasshopper. You say, "There are too many giants in that land. Nobody could ever live that way." And, do you know before a church does anything good or great it has to overcome the grasshoppers? The grasshoppers, there are plenty of them, people who sit around and say, "It can't be done; it won't be done; it shouldn't be done." These people are content to retreat back and live in the comparative safety of the desert waste, because there are no giants out there. No, there are no grapes out there either, but that's where most folks are living. They are failing to possess their possessions, because they have a grasshopper complex. Thank God that Caleb didn't follow the majority.

I want to tell you the majority is generally wrong. You just find out what most of the people are doing, and do something else, and you'll be generally right, probably. Now, not only did Caleb have to have courage to overcome grasshoppers. And, by the way, grasshoppers sometimes are hard to overcome, because they are hard to get at. You know, I'm like the fellow who said, "He didn't mind being swallowed by a whale, but he hated to be nibbled to death by minnows. Stoned to death with popcorn." You know, it's the little things. The people said, "Ah, it just can't be done."

B. **He Had to Overcome Giants**

All right now, look. Caleb overcame grasshoppers before he overcame giants. The next thing he overcame were giants. Look in verse 12—he says, *"Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there…"*—now, what are *Anakims*? That's not something you take for a headache. It is *Anakim—"the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced…"*—the *Anakims* were giants. There were giants in those days. I mean, great, huge giants. Caleb said, "I know that the giants are there"*—"if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said"* (Joshua 14:12).

Not only did Caleb have to face the grasshoppers; Caleb had to face the giants. And oh, there are some giants. But, Caleb wasn't bothered by those giants. As a matter of fact, he was kind of excited they were there.

Do you know what Caleb said, when he came back talking about the giants, in Numbers chapter 14—when he went the first time to spy out the land, and he saw all of

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those giants—do you know what he said about them? When he came back, he said to Moses and the people: *"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread…"*—did you hear that?—*"they are bread"*—b-r-e-a-d—*"for us"* (Numbers 14:8–9). What Caleb says is, "Pass the peanut butter. Look, they are bread. We are going to eat them. We're going to eat them alive. They are bread for us. Their defense has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Fear them not."

Do you know what *bread* is? *Bread* is something you eat to strengthen you and to enlarge you. Caleb said, "These giants will not be the means of our defeat; they will be the means of our growth. We're going to feed upon them." Caleb sat down at the table and said, "Pass the Anakim, please."

Now, you think about it—you think about it. A mother has to tell a little child: "Junior, eat your spinach." "I don't want any spinach." "Eat your spinach." "I don't want it." "Eat it. It is good for you." "I don't want it. Don't like it." "Make you grow." "Don't like it." Do you know what God has to say to us? "Now, dear, eat your Anakim—eat your Anakim." "I don't want to fight any giants." "Go ahead, it's good for you." "No, I'd just rather not." "Go ahead and eat them." I want to tell you, dear friend, Anakim is the breakfast of champions. Did you know that?

Look, you've been trying to get out of difficulty. You've been saying, "I don't want to face any problems; I don't want any difficulty." Don't you know that the difficulties that God gives you are the very things that will make you strong? They are bread. Sit down. Gobble them up. Listen: *"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD"* (Isaiah 54:17).

Oh, if we could only understand that these things that we think are difficulties are not difficulties. They are opportunities. Do you know the difference between a pessimist and an optimist? A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.

I heard about a man who went to Africa as a shoe salesman. He stayed over there a while, and wired his company back—he said, "Get me out of here." They said, "Why?" He said, "The people over here don't wear shoes." So, they brought him home, and sent another man. He stayed there a few weeks, and he wrote back, and he said, "Send me all the shoes you can get. I've never seen so many prospects."

Aren't you glad that Caleb could see from God's viewpoint? You know, we need to start seeing things from God's viewpoint. We need to get over the grasshopper complex. You know why people have a grasshopper complex? They look at a giant from

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their viewpoint. *You need to look at a giant from God's viewpoint. You need to stop saying, "Look how much bigger he is than I am." You need to start saying, "Look how much smaller he is than God is."*

You know, when you get up in an airplane, you look down, and things don't look so big, do they? You know, people like ants. You know, from an airplane, you can't tell a six-foot man from a four-foot man. That's right. You know, people look like ants. A lady sitting on an airplane, her first ride—she said, "It's true. Look down there on the ground. The people look like ants." Her friend said, "They are ants, stupid. We haven't taken off."

But, if you get up high enough, and you look down, things look mighty small. Did you know, we need to stop telling folks to keep looking up, and start telling folks to keep looking down? That's right. We are seated with Jesus in the heavenlies. We need to see the opposition from His viewpoint.

I want to tell you something, friend: *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). And, there is not a giant of doubt, and a giant of distress, and a giant of fear, and a giant of sin, that should not fall before a Christian filled with the Holy Spirit. We are to be living victoriously. We are to have the Word of God in our heart, and we are to believe God for victory. I'm sick and tired of God's people being defeated. The church of the living God is to move out like a mighty army. And, we are to say, "I want that mountain. It belongs to me. God has given it to me. And, I didn't come to be defeated. I came to be victorious."

C. He Had to Overcome Grey Hairs

Listen. Joshua had a character—he totally followed the Lord. And, because he had a character, he had a confidence—he believed the Lord. The Lord had given him a promise. And, because he had a confidence, he had courage—courage, not only to overcome grasshoppers, and courage to overcome giants, but courage to overcome grey hairs.

I want you to notice here in chapter 14—look in the last part of verse 10: *"Lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old."* That is, I'm 85 years old today. It was on his birthday, evidently. Or maybe, at least, he was close to it. *"As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me"* (Joshua 14:10–11). That is, I'm as strong now as I was when I was 40 years old. God supernaturally preserved him.

Now, he said, "The Lord kept me, as He said." Evidently, God said to Caleb, "Caleb, it may be a long time, son. But, when you get there, you are going to be able to do it." Do you know what that tells me? It tells me that, when God makes a promise, He gives you the strength to claim it. And, the God—listen to me—the God who preserved the possession for the man is the God who preserved the man for the possession.

You see, God works on both ends. God says, "Here is something over here. That's

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for you. It's yours." And then, God comes over here, and God gives you the strength; God gives you the ability. *Where* God guides*, God* provides. And, if God has to make you a teenager at age 85, He'll do it. Whatever it takes—whatever it takes—God will give you. And, Caleb had courage over grasshoppers, giants, and grey hairs—all three. He was moving in to take his possessions for God.

IV. Caleb's Conquest

Now, let's notice, finally, Caleb's conquest. For Caleb's character led to Caleb's confidence. And, Caleb's confidence led to Caleb's courage. And, Caleb's courage led to Caleb's conquest. You see, victory is God's plan for you. Do you know what the name *Hebron* means? It means "fellowship." That's what it means. And, Caleb is saying, "I want that mountain called *fellowship with God*."

Do you know he took the whole mountain? Do you know what that stands for? Fullness—all that God had for him. And, do you know what Hebron was noted for? Fruitfulness. Do you know what Caleb was saying? "I want to live on the mountain of fellowship, fullness, and fruitfulness." Isn't that where you want to live? Wouldn't you like to live on the mountaintop of fellowship with God? Wouldn't you like for your life to be like a vineyard full of fruitfulness? And, wouldn't you like the fullness of God? Wouldn't you like to completely possess your possessions, so that the fruit of the Spirit might be in your life?

Do you want me to tell you what the three biggest giants you are going to have to drive out are? I want you to look in chapter 15 for just a moment, and look in verse 14—chapter 15 and verse 14—I want you to see the names of these three giants: *"And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak"* (Joshua 15:14).

Here are three giants. Do you know what their names mean in the Old Testament? They used to have a meaning. Do you know what *Sheshai* means? It means, "Who I am." Here was a giant. He says, "You want to know my name? My name is *Who I am*."

All right, now Ahiman. Do you know what his name means? "What I am." And, Talmai—do you know what his name meant? "What I can do." "Who I am," "what I am," and, "what I can do." And, I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, those are the three biggest giants you are going to have to drive out of your life. The giant of ego—"Who I am"; the giant of pride—"What I am"; and, the giant of self-reliance—"What I can do"—"What I can do." Those are the giants that are going to have to be displaced—where you come to where you say, "God, I can't. And God, You can. And Lord, You promised to do it."

Ian Thomas said, "You can't. He never said, 'You could.' He can. He always said He would." Why don't you let Him? Why don't you let Him? I want to tell you, friends, there

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is a land of victory. There is a way to live victorious in this life. And, Christians ought not to be defeated. Christians ought to possess their possessions. They ought to live victoriously, night and day, day and night, through the Lord Jesus Christ. They are to be eating the luscious fruit. *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [self-control]"* (Galatians 5:22–23). Do you know that fruit? It comes from the bowers of Hebron. I want that mountain.

There is a little song that goes this way,

I saw the Giant of Prayerlessness upon the mountain high;
He laughed so hard at my unbended knee.
No longer in the Wilderness I'll stay, and so I cry:
I want that mountain. It belongs to me!

There was a Giant of Laziness who said I would not go
And witness for the One who sat me free.
I'll come from out the Wilderness, I'll witness now I know;
I want that mountain, it belongs to me!

One faithless Giant upon the crest of Hebron's lofty height
Has vowed that he's the one to make me flee.
I'll climb from out the Wilderness! And trust Jehovah's might!
I want that mountain, it belongs to me!

Let ev'ry Giant of Distress and Unbelief and Sin
Get ready now to vacate, for you see:
I've come from out the Wilderness! I know I'm going to win!
I want that mountain, it belongs to me!

I want that mountain! I want that mountain!
Where the milk and honey flow,
Where the grapes of Eschol grow,
I want that mountain, it belongs to me!
—Bill Harvey

You know, I just wish every one of us today would say, "I'm sick and tired of living in the valley of despair. I am sick and tired of not having all that my God has for me. I am sick and tired of having Adrian Rogers beat me over the head every Sunday morning with a sermon and tell me I'm not what I ought to be." Why don't you be like you ought to be? Why don't you be like old Caleb, and say, "Once and for all, I'm going to get out of the boat with both feet. I'm going for God."

Conclusion

I want to tell you the days are drawing short, ladies and gentlemen. There are only so

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many hours, so many weeks, left to serve God. And, it is time we stopped being sermon-listeners and started being mountain-climbers. Amen? I mean, let's go for God.

Oh, my heart almost jumps out of my throat, when I thing of what would happen if the people who just listen to these sermons on Sunday mornings would say, "I'm going for God. I want that mountain, it belongs to me!" God has promised us we will always triumph in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14). Let us pray.

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Grasshoppers, Giants, and Gray Hairs

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 6, 1983 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 14:6–14

"Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel."
JOSHUA 14:14

Outline

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I. Caleb's Character
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  A. He Faced Grasshoppers
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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn, if you will, to the book of Joshua the fourteenth chapter, an exciting chapter, an exciting story. Today, we're talking about gray hairs, grasshoppers, and giants, a message we're going to entitle "Grasshoppers, Giants, and Gray Hairs." That doesn't tell you what it's about, though. I want to tell you what it's about. The message today is going to be about laying hold of the promises of God. It's going to be about appropriating the things that God has for you, taking the Word of God, the truth of God, the promise of God, and getting them out of the Bible and into your heart, and out of your heart and into your life, so that you can enjoy that victory in Jesus that we were singing about a little while ago.

Do you know that many Christians today have a real problem? And I'll tell you what that problem is—and there are a lot of us here in the choir and other places that have that problem: We believe the Bible, we really believe it, but somehow we don't know how to appropriate the Bible and get it's truth into our heart.

Now we read the Bible and we have in the Bible what we call *"exceeding great and*

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precious promises," (2 Peter 1:4) and they are exceeding great, exceedingly precious, and we love them, and we say, "What a precious promise that is!" Sometimes we'll even write the promise out and do it in embroidery or calligraphy, we'll put it on the wall, and it's a marvelous motto that we have on our wall. But I want to tell you something, friend. It's all right to make mottos out of these verses and put them on the wall—I have some on my walls—but these are not primarily mottos to be hung on the wall; they are checks to be carried to heaven's bank and to be cashed. Do you understand what I am saying? I mean, dear friend, we somehow need to get these things out of the theoretical and get them down into the practical and to the actual and lay hold of the promise of God.

A lot of people just sort of window-shop through the Bible. Do you know what window-shopping is? A lot of ladies go window-shopping. They walk up and down and look at things, and come home. They don't have to buy anything to have a good time.

One man said to his wife, "Why do you call it shopping? You never buy anything." She said, "Why do you call it fishing? You never catch anything."

Now, that's the way some people do with the Bible. They just sort of window-shop through the Bible, but they never come away with the promises of God in their hand, laying claim to the promises of God. So I want to talk to you, dear friend, about how to take these truths and make them real; to appropriate these truths so that they will be promises that are rich and real in your heart and in your life.

Now, first of all, I want us to read the story. It's the story of an eighty-five-year-old giant killer and mountaineer. His name was Caleb. And let's begin to read here in verse 6—chapter 14, verse 6: *"Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadeshbarnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God. And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old"*—that is, "I am eighty-five years old." *"As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be that the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive*

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them out, as the LORD said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kennezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel." (Joshua 14:6–14) What an amazing story!

Now I want to put it into proper perspective. The place called Hebron was in Canaan, and Canaan, in the Bible, to those of us who are New Testament Christians, represents the victory of fullness; it represents the land of rest; it represents the Spirit-filled life—not heaven someday, but victory right now, here and now. And so we can look at these Old Testament historical happenings and we can shout all the way through them, for the Bible says that the things that happened to them happened to them for examples to us. (1 Corinthians 10:11) And so, that's wonderful, and we can look at this Old Testament story, and you and I can learn how to claim our inheritance, we can learn how to stand on the promise of God, we can learn the desert sands of mediocrity, we can come out of the valley of despair, and we can learn with old Caleb how to live on the mountaintop where the breezes of victory flow and where the grapes of Eshkol grow. We can learn right there how to live in victory.

Now I don't know about you, dear friend; but I want to live in victory—I want to live in victory! I believe that the Bible teaches that God's people are to be victorious all the way. For the Bible says, *"Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."* (2 Corinthians 2:14) I want to enjoy my inheritance. I want to know what it is to have the fullness of God upon my life. I want to know how to put the foot of faith upon the promises of God, and claim those promises, and say, "This one is mine." I want to conquer my Canaan. I want to claim my possessions. I want to live in victory. And I want you to, also.

So we're going to look in this passage of Scripture and we're going see something very wonderful. God had promised Caleb when he was forty years of age a particular place in the land of Canaan. It was a choice spot. It was a lush, verdant spot. It was a spot where grapes grew so big that it took two men to carry a bunch of them. It was a place where there were figs and pomegranates. It was a place of corn and oil and wine. It was a place of hills and valleys and waterfalls, beautiful and marvelous. Hebron was that place. And God said to Caleb, "Caleb, you can have it; it belongs to you."

But the children of Israel were fearful. They weren't willing to possess their possession. And so they wandered in the wilderness about forty more years. And Caleb is now not forty; he's eighty-five—but he stills remembers the promises of God. And when they went into the land, he said, "You remember that mountain the Lord promised me?" By the way, folks, it was full of giants. Do you remember that land? I want it. It belongs to me. And we have a little chorus many of you have sung: "I want that mountain; it belongs to me." Well, that comes out of this story right here of Caleb

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wanting that land.

Now, there are certain things I want you to see. And I want you to apply them not to Bellevue in general, but I want you to apply them to your hearts specifically, of how to live in victory, how to possess your possessions, how to claim your Canaan, how to make the promises of God real and alive and vibrant in your heart. Okay, are you with me?

Now I want you to notice about four or five things, and they all hang together.

I. Caleb's Character

The very first thing I want you to notice about this marvelously wonderful man that we're describing today, this man named Caleb who was eighty-five years of age: I want you to notice what I will call today Caleb's character—Caleb's character. Now, what was the character of this man? And, by the way, you know what character is, don't you? There's a difference between reputation and character. Some people have reputation; they don't have character. Reputation is what others think about you. Character is what God and your wife know about you.

Okay now, what was the character of this man? Well, his character is described in certain verses. Look, if you will, in verse 8 of this chapter: *"Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt:"*—but now, underscore this—*"but I wholly"*—wholly, completely—*"followed the LORD my God."* And then, look, if you will, in verse 9 what Moses said about this man: *"Thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God"*—the last part of verse nine. Then I want you to look in verse 14, if you will: *"Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because…"*—now, just underscore the word *because*; there's no secret about it, no hidden meaning here; I mean, it's just as clear, it's just as plain as black print on white paper—*"because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel."*

Now, what was the character of this man? Three times the Holy Spirit says this: *"He wholly followed the LORD God"*; *"he wholly followed the LORD God"*; *"he wholly followed the LORD God."* That is, every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber, every sinew, every bit of his being, was given over to the Lord. Do you know the Bible says that *"a double minded man is unstable in all of his ways,"* (James 1:8) but in another place the Bible says, "If your eye be single, then your body will be full of light"? (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34) In another place, the Bible says, "You will seek for me and find me when you search for me with your whole heart." (Jeremiah 29:13) All of those scriptures are telling us that God will not accept halfhearted religion. God wants us to follow Him with all there is, because, dear friend, if you don't—are you listening to me?—if you don't wholly, completely, totally follow the Lord, the devil is going to intimidate you.

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Now, in verse 8, he said there were some people who made the heart of the people melt. That is, they were filled with fear. And the reason that they were filled with fear is that they were in contradistinction with Caleb, who wholly followed the Lord. Now, listen to me. If you are not wholehearted, you're going to be fainthearted. Do you understand what I am saying? If you are halfhearted, you're going to be fainthearted, because you're not wholehearted. There's only one way to stand against the devil and all of the hordes of hell—and that is to give everything you have to Jesus Christ. But the man who can kneel before God can stand before anybody. You've got to be wholehearted. This halfhearted thing won't do it.

And, you know, before I preached this message this morning—I want to be honest with you, folks—I got in my study and I looked at my heart, and I searched my heart, and I said, "Adrian, are you really wholehearted?" I had to ask that question. I mean, "Have you given everything to the Lord? I mean your possessions, your reputation, your children, your physical life? Are you willing, Adrian, to do anything the Lord asks you to do? Are you willing to wholly—not halfheartedly, not a little bit, not ninety percent, but wholly, totally, completely, as best you know it—follow the will of the Lord?" My dear friend, that is the kind of a character I need to be if I'm not, and by God's grace I want to be. You say, "God, I want to give it all to you."

How many of you have ever read a Christian magazine called *Moody Monthly*? At least some time you have seen it. Do you know what *Moody Monthly* is? Oh, my goodness, listen. You'd better subscribe to *Moody Monthly*. It's one of the best Christian magazines published. By the way, I think you can get them in our bookstore—it's not a commercial—in our resource room. Moody ought to send me a paid subscription for that. It's a great Christian magazine, and you ought to have some of these kinds of magazines in your home rather than some of the stuff that some people have. How many of you have ever listened to Moody Bible Institute on the radio? Let me see your hand. The Moody station—yeah, great station. How many have ever heard of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago? Many of you have.

How many of you have ever heard of Dwight L. Moody? Of course you have! Hey, he was a great evangelist; he was a Billy Graham of his day. But let me tell you about Dwight L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody, out of whose life came the Moody Bible Institute, out of whose life came the Moody broadcast, out of whose life came *Moody Monthly* magazine, and the Moody Missionary Fellowship, and all of the things that happen around the world, was an ordinary person. He was a shoe salesman. He was saved at the age of nineteen, and God used him in Chicago with Sunday Schools, and then God used Moody as an evangelist, and God used him moderately.

He preached in this land, and he preached in England; but on his second trip to England Dwight L. Moody heard a man preach in an open field. They didn't even have a

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tent; they didn't even have a brush: in an open field this man preached. The man's name was Henry Varley. And this is what Henry Varley said. Henry Varley said, "The world has yet to see what God can do in, through, with, for, and by a man who is totally, completely surrendered to Him." Moody said, "At that moment, I bowed my head and said, I'll be that man—'I'll be that man. I'll give my life totally to Him." And from that time on there was something that happened in the life, in the ministry, of Dwight L. Moody. And his biographers and other preachers have talked about him and said it was Moody who took two continents and shook those continents toward God.

What was the character of this man named Caleb? I'll tell you—the Holy Spirit says it three times: He is totally, wholly, completely following the Lord his God. Are you doing that?

Now I want to tell you something, friend: Until you come to that point, the rest of what I have to say is not even going to fit. I'll tell it to you so you can go back and remember once you come to that point. But that's point number one—you'll not plow around it, nor under it, or over it; you're going to have to face it: totally, completely to Him. Anything less is an insult. G. Campbell Morgan said, "Lukewarmness is the worst form of blasphemy." It would be better to say there's not a God than to say there is one, but He doesn't excite me, and I'm not going to give all there is to Him—totally, wholly, completely following the Lord God.

II. Caleb's Confidence

Now, the second thing I want you to notice: I want you to notice that because Caleb had this character, he had a confidence. As you read this story, you're going to find out that Caleb is saying, "Just give me that land; I can take it; it's no problem to me." Look in verse 12: *"Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said."*

Now, here's a man who has a tremendous confidence about what he's doing. Where did he get that confidence? I mean, how could a man have so much faith? Have you ever wondered why it is that some people seem to have so much faith and some have such weak faith? Their faith is insipid and endemic, and others don't seem to have any faith at all. Why is that? Why is it that some have such strong faith, and others don't? I mean, has God been unfair? Is God specious? Is God arbitrary? Does God say, "I'm going to give to Bob Sorrell a lot of faith, but I'm not going to give to Tom Clayton that much faith," and so he's just one of the lucky ones, and Tom Clayton was behind the door when the faith was passed out? Is that the way it is? No. The Bible says, *"God hath dealt to every man [a] measure of faith,"* (Romans 12:3) and, "With God there's no

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respect of persons." (Romans 2:11) And yet, some seem to be so rich in faith and others seem to be so poor in faith.

Well, I want to ask you a question: What was the thing that made Caleb so strong in faith? Well, let me tell you something. Look, if you will, in verse 6 of this chapter—chapter 14, verse 6—look at the last part: *"Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses."* Now, just underscore that phrase: *"the LORD said unto Moses."* Then I want you to look, if you will, in verse 10: *"And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said."* Underscore that phrase: *"as he said."* Look, if you will, please, in verse 12 of this same chapter: *"Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day."* Do you see it? *"The Lord said"*; *"the Lord said"*; *"the Lord spake."*

Where did this man get his courage? Where did this man get his confidence? He got it from the Word of God. Listen to me, ladies and gentleman: "Faith comes by hearing the Word of God" (Romans 10:17)—Romans 10, verse 17. Now, what is faith? Faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not optimism. Faith is not a feeling that I can do it. Faith is not a hunch. Faith is not looking on the bright side. Faith is getting a word from God and acting on it. That's all faith is. Get it? I mean, it's just that simple. It is not getting a word from God. You can get a word from God and not have faith. Did you know that you can have belief and not have faith? Do you know the difference? You see, when you get a word from God, and you believe that word, that's belief; but when you act upon it, that 's faith. Let me tell you the difference between belief and faith: Faith *is* belief *with* legs *on it. It is getting a* word *from* God *and* acting *on it.*

Now, as I said before, some of us get a word from God, and we make a motto out of it. We hang it on the wall, we look at it, we brag about it, but we don't act upon it. We don't put the foot of faith upon that promise. But here is a man who had seen something in the Word of God, and he reached out and lay hold upon it, because God had said it.

Well, now that brings another question—or maybe I'm asking the same question another way: Why is it that some people can reach out and take the Word of God and appropriate it, and others don't seem to be able to? I want to say it again, dear friend—that Caleb's confidence came out of Caleb's character. Let me tell you why Caleb was so able to believe the Word of God. Caleb's character was the fertile soil in which the seed of faith could grow. Now I want to say that again. Listen to me now. Caleb's character was the fertile soil in which the seed of faith could grow. The Word of God is the seed, but it must find lodging in that kind of a heart. Here was a man who wholly followed the Lord.

When people have difficulty with unbelief, that difficulty does not come out of the head; that difficulty comes out of their heart. The Bible says in the third chapter of Hebrews, talking about those who fail to go into the Promised Land and to claim their

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Canaan, “Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” (Hebrews 3:12) Now, did you hear that? Not an empty head; an evil heart. Unbelief is not a mental thing; it is a moral thing. It does not come out of the head; it comes out of the heart. And the reason that Caleb could appropriate the promises of God, and the reason that the promises of God became a bright, living vibrant reality to this man Caleb is this: that he had a character; he was committed to the Lord.

The Bible says, “If any man wills to do the will of God, he will know the doctrine.” (John 7:17) Do you know what that means? When you take care of the commitment, God will take care of the confidence. God will give you that faith. That means, dear friend, when you are totally committed to Him, then the Word of God is going to find lodging in that good, warm, moist, rich soil of a character that is wholly, completely, dedicated to Him. I want to be that kind of a man. I want to be a man like this man who had such a pure heart. He followed God, and he said, “God said it, and because God said it, I’m going to stand on it.” Caleb’s character led to Caleb’s confidence.

III. Caleb’s Courage

Now, the third thing: Because he had such a character that gave him such a confidence, then Caleb’s confidence led to Caleb’s courage. I mean, here’s a man, when everybody else was off whimpering like a whipped dog, when everybody else was saying, “It can’t be done,” here was a man who said, “It can be done. Give me that mountain. The Lord promised it to me.” Where did he get that courage? “Oh,” you say, “it was his natural disposition.” I disagree with you. His courage was rooted in his confidence, and his confidence was rooted in his character.

Now he faced three foes.

A. He Faced Grasshoppers

First of all, he faced grasshoppers. Now, notice, if you will, in verse 8: *“Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt.”* Now, let me give you the background. When they came to the coast of Canaan, Moses, the general, took out twelve men, twelve spies for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and he said, “I want you to go across Jordan; I want you to spy out the land.” They were there to reconnoiter, to get ready for an invasion to take the land. And so, of the twelve men that went, there were ten men from ten tribes, and then Caleb and Joshua. They went across the river Jordan, and when they got in there, boy, they saw it: the hills, the valleys, the waterfalls! They saw the verdant vines. They saw the grapes, the pomegranates, the figs. They saw the fowl; they saw the fish. They saw all of these things, wonderful and beautiful, and they came back and said, “Yeah, just like you said: it’s marvelous; it’s wonderful; it’s beautiful; it’s just grand! But there’s just one problem there: There are a bunch of giants

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in that place, and they're the sons of Anak."

And here's what they said, if you want to jot it down, in Numbers chapter 13, verse 33: *"And we saw there the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as"*—are you ready for this?—*"grasshoppers."* (Numbers 13:33) That is, "We were feeling pretty good till we saw them; and when we saw these giants, big as they are, strong as they are"—and, folks, there were a lot of them; they were in walled cities, and they were big and muscular; and these fellows said—"when we looked at them, we felt like a bunch of grasshoppers."

Now, folks, the very first thing the devil will try to do to you to keep you from living in victory is to intimidate you by the size of the enemy and the size of the problem. And he can give to you a grasshopper complex. And as long as you're intimidated, as long as you live with a grasshopper complex, you're going to be like Timothy, and you're going to have to be warned like the Apostle Paul warned him: *"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of sound mind."* (2 Timothy 1:7) And I'm speaking on television and radio, and by tape later on, and to people who are in this congregation, who are living with a grasshopper complex. The devil has intimidated you. You're not a grasshopper; but if you put your eyes on the enemy, then try to measure your life by that, that's the only perspective you have: you're going to feel like a grasshopper.

B. **He Faced Giants**

But I want to tell you, not only did he face grasshoppers; he had courage to overcome the grasshoppers, and he had courage to overcome the giants. The giants were there. They were big in size, great in number; they were in fenced cities, and they lived on a mountaintop.

Have you ever played king of the mountain when you were a boy? Got up on a pile of dirt and pushed all the other boys down? The guy that has the high ground has the best spot, isn't that right? When you're on the high ground, you can just keep shoving the others down. They were on the high ground; they were there, they were firmly entrenched. Ol' Caleb said, "We're going to get them. Okay, listen," he said, "I know the giants are there, but I am going into that land, and I'm going to take it."

Now we, every one of us, face giants: giants of doubt, giants of fear, giants of discouragement; financial giants, giants of sickness, domestic giants; all kinds of problems and fears; all kinds of things that the devil throws in our way; all kinds of obstacles. I face them, and you face them. I want to ask you a question: Do you think that the giants that were in that Promised Land took God by surprise? God knew they were there. They were there all the time, and they were there for God's purpose.

Do you know what God's purpose was? Listen. In Numbers 14, verses 8 and 9, we

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find it. Listen to it. Here's what Caleb and Joshua said. They said, "We can take that land in spite of the giants—and here's why we can take that land"—are you listening? *"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey."* Now, listen to this: *"Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land;"*—now, listen to this next phrase— *"for they are bread for us."* (Numbers 14:8–9) Now, what does mean? Not *bred*, not that they were sired for us; they are *bread*, the kind of bread that you make out of wheat and bake. "They are food for us": that's what he's saying. They are bread like the bread that you make your toast out of this morning, like the bread that you will enjoy today at your noon meal: *"they are bread for us."*

Now, what is bread? Bread is the stuff of life. What happens when you eat bread? You're strengthened by it and you grow by it. Ladies and gentleman, the sovereign God has given us all great promises, but Paul said, "When a door is opened to us, there are many adversaries." (1 Corinthians 16:9) Why? God doesn't want it to be easy. Why? Because God knows that if it were easy, you would become sick and weak and endemic. So God places obstacles in your path, and God says, "Those obstacles are there for your food; they are there that you might depend upon me. Meet those obstacles, overcome those obstacles; and when you do, it will give strength to your soul like eating bread will give strength to your body."

And I want to tell you something, ladies and gentleman: Wheaties is not the breakfast of champions; Anakim are, giants are. And God wants you to feed upon your difficulties—depend upon Him. And when you see God bring difficulties across your path, you'll know that with those difficulties God is going to bring power into your life, and then you're going to become a Canaan conqueror, you're going to claim the promises of God, and you are going to grow by the spiritual food that you eat.

C. **He Faced Gray Hairs**

But listen. Not only did he face grasshoppers, and not only did he face giants; but I'll tell you another thing he faced: he faced gray hairs. I want you to look in verses 10 and 11. Do you know how old he was when he was doing all of the talking? Look at it: *"And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day, fourscore and five years old."* That is, he was eighty-five years old. And now, notice verse 11—put a star by it: *"As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in."* Do you hear what this man said? This man said, "I am as strong now as I was more than forty years ago. Forty-five years ago, I was a young man, strong, my muscles ripped; there was a spring in my

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step. Now I'm an old man. But you give me this mountain, because don't you let this gray hair fool you: I am as strong now as I was then."

"Now," you say, "Brother Rogers, don't you think that he's lost some of his strength?" Not one ounce of it! You see, friend, you're thinking about a different kind of strength. This man was not talking about the strength that was in his bulging biceps; this man was not talking about the keenness of his eye. Let me tell you what his strength was when he was forty. Do you know what his strength was then? God—God! Do you think that a forty-year-old man would have been able to go up and take those giants out? No! And a twenty-year-old man couldn't. And no other man could—unless that man was depending upon God. What was his strength when he was forty? God! What was his strength when he was eighty-five? God! And God doesn't change. "I'm as strong now as I was then."

Some of you people think you're young and healthy and all of that, and you think that's your strength. I want to tell you the Bible says in Isaiah 40, *"Even the youths shall faint and…shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength,"* (Isaiah 40:30–31) and that word *renew* literally means "exchange" their strength. They're going to turn over their weakness for God's strength, and God is going to give them strength. And I want to tell you, dear friend, that the things that God calls us to do, do not depend upon physical stamina, physical strength, financial strength, or any other kind of strength, except God's strength. *"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."* And some of you, some of you who think you're over the hill, God pity you! Let me give you a verse: *"Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day."* (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Do you want me to tell you where the great strength of Bellevue is? In so many of her seniors who have walked with God so many years! And, oh, how they get hold of God in prayer, and who are that reservoir of wisdom and that fortress of faith, and they can say with ol' Caleb, "My body may be wearing out a little bit, but I'm as strong now as I was then, because God *"is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"* (Psalm 27:1)

I like what Douglas MacArthur had to say. Listen to it. You can tell by my preaching I like Doug MacArthur. He said, "Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of red cheeks, red lips, and subtle knees; it is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions. It is a freshness of the deep springs of life. Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over a life of ease. This often exists in a man over fifty more than in a boy of twenty." And then, the great general said, "Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear and despair,

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these are the long, long years that bow their head and turn the growing spirit back to dust." And I'll not read it all, but I want to read one more paragraph out of it. Listen to it: "You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fears; as young as your hope, as old as your despair." Isn't that beautiful?

Friend, there's a soul's fountain of youth, and "though our outward man perish, the inward man shall be renewed day by day." And isn't it wonderful to know that when God tells us to do something, we don't have to depend upon the arm of flesh, and we can say, "If there's a promise that God has for us, I'm just as strong today as I've ever been," because His promises are yea and amen in the Lord Jesus Christ? (2 Corinthians 1:20) And I want to tell you there are the unfading strengths that God gives for His undiminishing promises.

IV. Caleb's Conquest

Now one last thing, and my time is gone. But are you following? Do you see what I'm saying? He was a man of character, totally given out to the Lord; and because he had character, he had confidence. That character was the soil in which the seed of faith could grow. And because he had confidence, he had courage. Grasshoppers, giants, and gray hairs notwithstanding, he said, "I can do it." And his courage led to his conquest. Look, if you will, in verses 13 and 14: *"And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day,"*—and here's the secret of it; here it is, underscore it—*"because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel."* Nothing hard to understand there. Here's a man who said, "With all of my heart, as much as in me is, I'm going for God."

Conclusion

Have you done that? When he got over in that land, there were the grapes, the figs, the pomegranates, the oil and wine. You say, "Brother Rogers, what does that mean to me?" I'll tell you what it means to me: the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, goodness, temperance, mercy, all of the attributes of God, longsuffering. (Galatians 5:22–23) Don't you want to be dwelling in Canaan? Don't you want to be able to sing, "Victory in Jesus," and mean it? Don't you want to come out of the desert sands, and out of the valleys of depression, and live on a mountaintop?

Did you know that there's a great danger in what I've preached today? Do you want me to tell you what it is? Everybody knows that Bellevue is going to hear a report tonight, and everybody is putting the message—listen to me—in that frame of reference. And you'll miss what I'll have to say if you don't understand that. What I am talking to

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you about right now is your personal walk with God. Do you understand what I am saying? I am talking to you about you claiming your Canaan. I am talking to you about you living on the mountaintop of victory. I'm talking to you about you enjoying the fruit of the Spirit and the things of God being real in your heart. I'm talking to you how you can claim the promises of God, because, ladies and gentleman, this church is going to be no bigger, no greater, no stronger than you're strong. Do you understand what I am talking about? I mean, folks, you want to know who the church is? Go home and look in the mirror. That's us! And we'd better learn how to claim the promises of God.

Now I want to tell you here was a man—here was a man who wholly followed the Lord. And my message this morning is to ask you one thing, one thing only—and that is that you give yourself totally, one hundred percent, without reservation, to Jesus Christ today, and mean it: "Jesus Christ is Lord." And indeed He is!

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Higher Ground

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 5, 1991 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 14:6–14

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

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Introduction

Take God's Word now, and open with me to Joshua chapter 14—Joshua chapter 14. And, when you have it open, I want you to look up here—Joshua chapter 14. I want to ask you a question: What do these things have in common: God, grapes, grasshoppers, giants, and grey hair? Well, they're all right here in this chapter, and they have in common that all of these words and some other wonderful words adhere around the life of a man named Caleb. And, Caleb, in this chapter, we see, was eighty-five years old when he said—concerning a mountain in Hebron that God had promised him—he said, "I want that mountain. It belongs to me." And, the mountain at that time was filled with fierce giants, but Caleb took the sword out of his hand and started up that mountain to conquer that mountain.

Now, he was eighty-five years old. When people get to be about forty or fifty, we have a way of saying they've gone "over the hill"—not Caleb. Friend, he wasn't going

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over the hill; he was going up the mountain. He's eighty-five, and he wasn't a part of the "over the hill gang." Actually, he wanted to be king of the mountain at eighty-five —and he was. We'll learn a wonderful, wonderful story here of this man named Caleb. As a matter of fact, he is a living example of a wonderful verse. Don't turn to this one—but we'll stay right here in Joshua 14—but just put this in the margin: Proverbs 16:31: *"The [grey] head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."* Isn't that a great verse? *"The [grey] head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness"* (Proverbs 16:31).

Now, let's read the scripture; I begin in verse 6: *"Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadeshbarnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren [who] went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God. And Moses [swore] on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God. And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD [spoke] this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old"*—that is, "I am, today, 85"—*"[And] as yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, [of which] the LORD [spoke] in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and [how] that the cities were great and [fortified]: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneth the Kenezite unto this day, because…he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel"* (Joshua 14:6–14).

What a lesson! What a lesson we learn today from the life of Caleb! Now, it's not just a lesson for older people; it's a lesson for every one here, no matter what your age, because one day, if the Lord tarries and you live, you'll be an older person. By the way, I was reading recently about a man who was 103 years of age, and they asked him—they said, "What is your formula?" He said, "Don't die!" That's the way to keep on living. Well, some—it seems like they die even before they die, and they seem to be earning a living and wasting their lives; and they're living in the valley of defeat when they ought to be living on the mountaintop of victory. Hebron, in the Bible, represents the land of victory and fullness that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I want to get right into

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the heart of this message today, and I pray God that He will take what I have to say from the Word of God and just rivet it into your heart and etch it upon your soul. Whether you're six or 60, I want you to listen.

I. Caleb's Character

The very first thing I want you to see about this 85-year-old giant killer—this 85-year-old mountaineer—is what I want to call "his character." There's something about this man. You just have to love him. He had a character that was a marvelously wonderful character. It's the kind of a character I want. As a matter of fact, I want to be honest with you: I prayed this morning about having this kind of a character on my knees. I said, "O God, O God, I want to be this kind of a man."

There's one thing that marked this man called Caleb, and it was his character. And, it is pointed out in verse 8, and then again in verse 9, and also here in verse 14. I want you to see a phrase that keeps coming up, and it is this: it says that he wholly followed the Lord. Look in verse 8: *"Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly"*—that is not holy, but completely; wholly with all of my heart; with every ounce, with every inch, with every nerve, with every fiber, with all of the sinew and muscle and corpuscle and bone that is in me, I completely, wholly—*"followed the LORD my God"* (Joshua 14:8). Do you see it there in verse 8? And then, look in verse 9—the last part of verse 9: Moses said to Caleb, *"Thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God"* (Joshua 14:9). Look in the last part of verse 14: Joshua gave him the land, the Bible says, *"because…he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel"* (Joshua 14:14). Three times it says it—completely, totally, with all of his heart.

Dwight L. Moody was a great evangelist of yesteryear. God used Dwight L. Moody in many ways, as He's using Billy Graham today. It was not really until this man, who had been a shoe salesman and really never been to seminary, never been to college, was quite unlettered… But, he had gone to England on one occasion to preach. And, God had used him, but not in great, great ways, until he went to England the second time. And, when he went to England the second time, he went to a revival meeting that was being held in an open field, and there was a man out there who was preaching. His name was Henry Varley, and Henry Varley was kind of a quiet, unassuming man, but Henry Varley said this: he said, "The world has yet to see what God can do in, and through, and with, and for a man wholly committed to Him." Moody heard that: "The world has yet to see what God can do through, and with, and for a man wholly committed to Him." And, Dwight L. Moody said, "By God's grace, I will be that man!" And friend, that was the secret of the life of Dwight L. Moody. God took this man without training, without education, relatively uncultured, and God used him, as we've often heard, to shake two continents for Jesus Christ. And, I said this morning on my knees—

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and I hope you'll say in your heart, whether you're six or sixty—"O God, O God, take me—all of me."

Are you one hundred percent committed to Jesus Christ? A man who is ninety percent faithful to his wife is not faithful at all. Isn't that true? Isn't that true? And, a man who is ninrty percent committed to Jesus Christ is not committed to Jesus Christ at all.

Give yourself—all of you—to Jesus Christ. Now, that's his character. That's the first thing I want you to see—Caleb's character.

II. Caleb's Confidence

Now, I want you to see Caleb's confidence, because, you see, Caleb's character was what led to Caleb's confidence. You talk about a confident man! I mean, here's an 85-year-old man who says, "Man, let me at 'em." Where—where—did he get this confidence? Well, you see, his confidence came out of a pure heart.

Now, let me tell you this about faith. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. I hope you understand that. You'll never have faith unless you hear God—never! Faith is not positive feeling; faith is believing what God has said. That's all faith is—believing what God has said. And, you find here in this passage that word, five times, that says something like the Lord said. For example, look in verse 6: *"Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said"* (Joshua 14:6). Look, if you will, in verse 10: *"And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said"* (Joshua 14:10). Look, if you will, in verse 12: *"Now therefore give me this mountain, [of which] the LORD [spoke]"* (Joshua 14:12). Do you see that? Do you know why Caleb knew that he had that mountain? Friend, when he started up that mountain with a sword in his hand, he already had the title deed in his pocket, see? I mean, listen, he had the Word of God. He says, "The Lord said… The Lord said… The Lord said…" But, why is it—why is it—that there are people sitting in this congregation this morning—both of them have copies of the Word of God; one is a believer and the other is not a believer? I mean, God has spoken to us all. All of us have been given the promises of God; and yet, some don't have faith, and others do.

Now, listen to me, dear friend: Caleb's character was the soil—the fertile soil—in which the seed of faith grew. The seed of faith is the Word of God. But, the Word of God—the promises of God—don't find lodging in a heart that is not totally committed to Him. You say, "Pastor, I have difficulty with faith. I have difficulty believing. I have intellectual problems." No, you don't have intellectual problems. Friend, you have moral problems. The problem is not in your head; it is in your heart. The Bible says, *"[Beware]…lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief"* (Hebrews 3:12)—not an empty head, an evil heart. I want to tell you… You want faith? You come to where old Caleb was and just say, "Lord, I'm going to follow You wholly, totally, completely." And then, you get this book and begin to read it, and it will burst aflame in your hand and in

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your heart. You see, listen, his character—his character—was the fertile soil in which the seed of faith grew. "God said it." He said, "God said it. The Lord said it, and I believe it."

Oh, if you're a senior saint today, I want you to stand on the promises of the Word of God. A pure heart will respond to the Word of God like your eye responds to light when it's right, like your ear responds to sound when it is right. Your heart will respond to the Word of God when you have that character. You say, "Well, has God given me any promises?" Oh boy, you better believe it! And, how wonderful are the promises of God!

If you're a senior saint, listen to these promises. Isaiah 46:4: *"even to your old age I am he; and even to [your white hair I] will…carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."* That's God's promise to you. Listen to Psalm 92:13–14: *"Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age."* You want to have a fruitful old age? Oh, there are so many promises of the Word of God that we need to assimilate today.

III. Caleb's Courage

Now, think with me: Caleb's character led to Caleb's confidence, and Caleb's confidence led to Caleb's courage. Did you know that fear is the great enemy of old age? Fear! But, here was a man who had no fear. He was a courageous man. Look in verses 11–12: he says, *"[I'm] as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain"* (Joshua 14:11–12). Oh, what an undaunted courage he had! Why did he have courage? He had courage because he had confidence. Why did he have confidence? He had confidence because he had character. He totally followed the Lord our God. He had to face all kinds of things.

A. He Faced Grasshoppers

He had to face the grasshopper crew. Look, if you will, in verse 7 here: he says, *"Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren [who] went up with me made the heart of the people to melt: but I wholly followed the LORD"* (Joshua 14:7–8). Now, if you… If you were to go back to the Book of Numbers, you'd find out who those brethren were. God sent out 12 spies, and ten of them brought back an evil report. They went into the land of Canaan where Mount Hebron was, and where the grapes were, and the pomegranates and the figs; and they came back, and they said, "Sure, sure, it's a wonderful land, yeah, yeah… All that good stuff is there, all right, but you'd better believe something else. We saw a land full of giants. The sons of Anakim were there. The Anakim were there—the great, huge

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giants." And, they said, "When they saw us, we looked like grasshoppers in their sight. And, when we saw them, we agreed with them. We felt like grasshoppers." And so, here was old Caleb, and he had to deal with that grasshopper crowd who said, "It can't be done." And, I want to tell you, if you're a senior saint today, or if you're a young man today, there are plenty of grasshoppers around who'll try to keep you from God's promises.

B. He Faced Giants

They see the giants. Oh, there are some giants out there. I know there are some giants out there. What are some of the giants that old people face? There are giants of ego, and pride, and self-reliance, and self-pity, and discontent, and grouchiness. Do you ever get around a grouchy old person? Oh, hey, folks, you're supposed to be preserved, but not pickled! Now listen, giants in the land, critical spirit, fear—all of these things are there. Sure, there are giants in the land.

Right now there are some of you sitting there saying, "Well, Adrian, that's all right. You can preach about all this stuff, but you wait till arthritis gets you." Or, "You wait till you go the bank and there's no money, or your pension check is already spent." Or, "You wait till the kids don't call you." Or, "You wait till you go to the doctor, and the doctor tells you that you have some greedy malady that's eating away at your life. You wait, and then talk to me about those giants." Well, my dear friend, I want to tell you, I'm not giving my experience to you right now; I'm giving the Word of God to you right now. And, I want to tell you, there are giants are in the land, and there'll be some grasshoppers who'll say that what this preacher is preaching today cannot really work out in your life—that you can't really have a life of victory. I'm here to tell you, you can, by the Word of God. And, don't you listen to these little grasshoppers. They're all around here telling you, "It can't be done." Caleb said, "I'm not going to listen to you. God has given me a promise, and I'm going this land." The difference between Caleb and everybody was they had their eyes on the giants and Caleb had his eye on God. They were all saying, "Look how much bigger those giants are than we are." And, Caleb was saying, "Look how much smaller they are than God is." It's all just a matter of viewpoint.

Now listen, dear friend: not only did he face grasshoppers; he had to face the giants. The giants were there; they were big. And, I don't know what's harder to overcome—the grasshoppers who say, "It can't be done" or the giants who say, "It won't be done." But, don't you pay any attention to either one of them. You get your eyes on God.

C. He Faced Grey Hairs

And, he faced—listen—not only grasshoppers and giants, but he faced grey hairs. He's getting up in age. Look in verse 11; he says in verse 11: *"I am as strong this day as I*

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was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now" (Joshua 14:11). And, he goes on to say, "I'm 85 years old." Are you getting up there in years? That's all right—that's all right. God has not finished with you.

I was reading the other day how you can know when you're getting old: when everything hurts, and what doesn't hurt doesn't work; and you join a health club and don't go; you decide you're going to procrastinate, but you never get around to it; and your mind makes contracts that your body cannot meet. I like this one: when dialing long distance wears you out, you can tell, dear friend, you're getting old. But now, now, listen—listen.

You say, "But Adrian, here was a man who had physical strength. I mean, I don't have physical strength. I'm 85 years, and I couldn't take a sword and go whip some giants. I don't have the physical strength." Of course you don't. You know why? Because God doesn't intend for you to have that physical strength. You see, why did God give Caleb physical strength? Because he had to have it to do what God had commanded him to do. That's it. You see, every command of God is a promise of God. Now, God gave Caleb supernatural strength, but his supernatural strength was only an illustration of the greater spiritual strength that all of us have who are to wait upon the Lord. Now, you listen to me: if God gives you a promise, God will give you the strength to claim that promise. God gave Caleb a promise. He needed physical strength, so God gave him physical strength. If God gives you a spiritual promise, God will give you spiritual strength. I want to make it clear, and I want to make it plain: the God who promised the mountain promised the power to conquer it. An *undiminished power is always available for unfading promises.* Did you hear that? Undiminished power is always available for unfading promises.

Now, there's something better than physical strength, and it is spiritual strength. If your body today…and I know I'm speaking to some; I'm looking to some. I know some of you have just gotten out of the hospital to get here, and you're in pain right now listening to me. I want to give you a verse—Isaiah 40:28 and following: *"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding"*—listen—*"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength"* (Isaiah 40:28–29). Whatever God's promise to you is—I don't care what it is—if it's a promise from God, God will give you the power to claim that promise. You see, Caleb had a character; that character led to a confidence, and that confidence led to a courage. And, grasshoppers, nor giants, could keep Caleb from what God wanted him to have.

Do you ever read much about Douglas MacArthur, the great general in World War II? Douglas MacArthur had something that was framed, and he hung it on his wall in his

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office. I want to share a part of it with you: “Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of red cheeks, red lips, and subtle knees. It is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions. It is a freshness of the deep springs of life. Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over a life of ease. This often exists in a man of 50 more than in a boy of 20”—and then, listen to this classis statement—“Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years; people grow old by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear, and despair—these are the long, long, long years that bow the head and turn the growing spirit back to dust.” Now, listen to the great general—listen. He said, “You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fears; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.” I think that’s beautiful.

IV. Caleb’s Conquest

You see, his confidence led to his courage, and his courage—are you listening?—led to his conquest. Look in verse 13: *“And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance”* (Joshua 14:13). Here’s old Josh and Caleb, and Joshua says, “Caleb, you believe God?” He said, “I believe God.” He said, “All right, Son, it’s yours; take it.” And, he takes the land and the mountain. He’s not over the hill; he’s on the mountaintop.

You say, “What does that have to do with me today, Pastor? What is my land of fruitfulness?” Well, listen to Galatians 5:22: *“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering…goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance”* (Galatians 5:22–23). That’s your land of Canaan; that’s the fruit that God wants you to have. Those are the grapes of Eshcol that God has for you.

Conclusion

Let me just close this message by saying something to all of our seniors. I love you so much. I thank you for loving me. I think you’re one of the major reasons that I’m here at Bellevue Baptist Church. When Joyce and I came to this church, because of you, we dived into an ocean of love, and we’re still wet. And, I want to say to you, my dearly beloved, you are not a has-been; you are an “is.” That’s what you are right now. You are not a liability to this church. You are, perhaps, our greatest asset. And, in your land of conquest, there are three basic, basic, basic things I want for you.

A. This Church Needs Your Wisdom

I want you, first of all, to give to this church your wisdom—your wisdom. God has matured you. You know things the rest of us don’t know. Some of you, like Mary Hunter, have been here over 60 years. Some of us, like myself, have been here only 20 years—

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just got here. Keep giving us your wisdom.

B. This Church Needs Your Service

Secondly, don't stop serving God actively. You say, "I'm retired, Pastor." You're not retired from God, mister—you're not retired from serving the Lord. You see, one retiree said—and I wrote it down; I like this—he said, "Never say of me, 'He's too old to be bothered with these things.' You say to me, 'Look, you old rascal, you've got more time than the rest of us. Hop to it—hop to it.'" God has so much He wants you to do.

C. This Church Needs Your Prayer

The third thing: Not only do we need your wisdom and we need your service, but, dear friend, we desperately need your prayer. You know something wonderful about an older person? They know something that a lot of younger people don't know. Number one: They know how to pray. And, number two: They know what to pray for. Oh, what power—what power—in the prayers of our spiritual mountaineers who are living on the mountaintop!

Now, when Moses went up on the mountaintop to intercede and Joshua was down there in the valley fighting, the Bible says, when Moses held up his hands, Joshua prevailed; when Moses let down his hands, the enemy prevailed. Friend, senior saints, "keen-agers," stay on that mountaintop for me, would you please? Pray for your pastor. Pray for your staff. Pray for these young families. Help us. We need you. We need your wisdom. We need your service. We need your prayers.

Let me just give you this one last, last thought, and then we're going to close this morning. Listen to me: the secret of eternal youth is not trying to hold on to or recapture what is forever gone; it is experiencing daily by faith the power of a supernatural life and living on the mountaintop.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Six or 60, young or old, widowed or married, sick or healthy, would you say right now, "O God, I want to be like Caleb. I want to totally, 100 percent, give my heart to You, so when I do that, dear God, I will have the faith that You want me to have"? Again, I want to remind you that Caleb's character was the soil for Caleb's confidence, and Caleb's confidence was the soil for Caleb's courage; and Caleb's courage was the soil for Caleb's conquest. God doesn't want you to be over the hill; God wants you to be on the mountain. Father, I pray in the name of Jesus that You will just seal this message to our hearts. In Jesus's wonderful name. Amen.

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Don’t Settle for Less Than God’s Best

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 4, 2004 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 17:12–18

“Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, but did not utterly drive them out.”
JOSHUA 17:13

Outline

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Introduction

Be finding Joshua chapter 17 in the Word of God. We’re going to look in the Old Testament, but we’re going to find a New Testament lesson tonight. We’re facing a new year, and I want us to face the new year in victory. And the book of Joshua is a book of victory, and it tells us how to have victory day by day, for the Bible says clearly, *“All these things happened unto them…”*—the Old Testament pilgrims—*“all these things happened unto them”*—listen, now—*“for examples”* to us. (1 Corinthians 10:11) This is not history only. It is history—it literally happened—but when you understand that it is also devotional literature, you can take these Old Testament passages and shout your way through them. And you can find applications for your life in the twenty-first century.

When you look at the Bible and you try to understand the Bible, you have to ask

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three questions. Question number one: What did it mean then? Now, if you don't understand that, you can't understand the rest. Don't try to make it mean something it doesn't mean. Don't think it can mean two things. It means what it means—that's all. What does it mean? What did it mean then? But now you ask a second question, a follow-up question: How does it apply now? Okay, what did it mean then? How does it apply now? But you're not finished yet. What did it mean then? How does it apply now? And now here you're ready to make it burst aflame: How does it apply to me personally? Now you haven't really studied the Bible, you haven't gotten into the Bible, till you ask that third question: How does it apply to me personally?

Now what we're going to see here in this seventeenth chapter is this: that the children of Israel had gone into the Promised Land. And the Promised Land represents in Bible typology a fullness and fruitfulness and joy and victory. They're living in Canaan. It's a picture of a Christian living in victory, living the Spirit-filled life. But there was something wrong, because there were still Canaanites in the land. Now the Canaanites were demon-possessed people. They represent the power of Satan ensconced to keep us from having the full blessing that God wants us to have. And these people—God's people—were keeping company with Canaanites.

Let's look at it here—Joshua chapter 17, beginning in verse 12—look at it—the Bible says here, *"Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong,"*—that is, when they could have put the Canaanites out—*"they put the Canaanites to tribute, but did not utterly drive them out."* (Joshua 17:12–13) There was no reason that they did not, but they would not; they would not drive these Canaanites out of the land. Now they had some demon-possessed people who were keeping them from their full inheritance, keeping them from total victory.

Now I want you to have victory, and so I want to lay three things upon your heart tonight. And I pray God that you'll get them in your notebook, but I pray that you'll get them from your notebook into your head, and I pray that you'll get them from your head into your heart.

I. The Problem of Sinful Compromise

The first thing I want you to see is what I'm going to call the problem of sinful compromise. Now God's plan for His people was total occupation. God told Joshua and the children of Israel to take the land from border to border, from sea to sea, and to take it totally. Every grain of sand they were to take. There were Canaanites. But God said, "You are to drive them out of the land." (Numbers 33:52)

Sir, lady, young man, young lady, God's plan for you is victory. Now I'm going to ask

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a rhetorical question. Don't answer it out loud, but for your sake, for God's sake, for my sake, our sake, would you answer it honestly? Answer it: Are you living in victory? I say, are you living in victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil? That is God's plan for you. A Christian who is not living day by day victoriously is an abnormality, and he's a shame to Almighty God. First Corinthians chapter 15, verse 57, says, *"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:57) Another passage says that God "causes us to triumph always in Christ Jesus." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

Douglas MacArthur was a man that I admired as a boy. Douglas MacArthur said one thing that I've quoted often. He said, "In war, there is no substitute for victory." We're at war, and there's no substitute for victory. There is an alternative to victory, and that is defeat. But there's no substitute for victory. We are to have victory over the world. The world is not to conform us in. We're not here to get along with the world; we're here to overcome the world. And when I say "the world," I'm talking about a system set up against our Lord and His Christ. We're here not only to overcome the world, but we're here to overcome the flesh. The flesh is not to be condoned; it's to be crucified. You say, "Well, I have my little faults. Temper just runs in my family." You're living in defeat, and you are a disgrace to the grace of God that saved you. You're to have victory over the devil. And some may say, "Well, I'm not afraid of the devil." The devil's supposed to be afraid of you. You cannot peacefully co-exist with the devil any more than you could peacefully co-exist with a roaring lion. The devil is described in the Bible as a roaring lion. (1 Peter 5:8)

Now, think about these Canaanites. There were three kinds of Canaanites that they failed to drive out, and they represent the things that keep us from victory.

A. **The Canaanites That They Favored**

First of all, there were the Canaanites that they favored. Write it down: the Canaanites that they favored. Notice in verse 13: *"Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong,"*—now, watch this—*"that they put the Canaanites to tribute, but did not utterly drive them out."* (Joshua 17:13) They said, "There's no reason to drive these Canaanites out. We can make them pay tribute to us. We can tax them. We can make slaves out of them. They are good for us. They are beneficial to us. And so, rather than driving them out, we will domesticate them. We will tame them. We will cause them to serve us."

Now many Baptists and some members of this congregation have done that: they have favored certain sins. They say, "Well, it's a little habit, but I like it. It gives me pleasure. It may be a shady deal, but it's not overtly wicked. It may be some doubtful behavior. It may be an unequal yoke: I'm dating or flirting with a boy or a girl that's not a

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true child of God, but it's a little thing. I believe this relationship is good for me." Point: There are vices that people actually think that they can somehow tame and use and get benefit from.

I mentioned this morning in the message gambling. Gambling is one of these. People talk about the good that gambling will do here in the Mid-South and in Tennessee. Now we're blessed with the lottery. Have you noticed what's happening now? The government is beginning to advertise the lottery. Your state government now is encouraging you to gamble. The government is doing that. Do you know what a pimp does? A pimp entices two people to sin, and the pimp makes money on it. That's what the government is doing: the government now is encouraging our people into sin so that the government can get a piece of the action.

The same is true about beverage alcohol. These are the Canaanites that somehow we favor. And we've been told here in Memphis that beverage alcohol is good for business: it brings in tourists; it brings in hotels; it brings the good times; it gets the money flowing. And they say, "Look at all the taxes that we get from beverage alcohol!" For every dollar we get, statisticians tell us, it takes about four to clean up the mess.

I heard about a flea one time that made a deal with a donkey. The flea said, "If you'll let me get on your back and suck blood, for every gallon of blood I suck, I'll give you a pint back in revenue." The donkey said, "It sounds like a good deal to me." That's about the way some people think.

Friend, there are the Canaanites that we favor. We think that somehow we can take these vices and use them for our glory. And many Baptists will look the other way. They'll cut a deal favoring some Canaanite. Are you living in victory of that kind of Canaanite?

B. **The Canaanites That They Feared**

But not only were there the Canaanites that they favored; even worse, there were the Canaanites that they feared. Look in verses 15 and 16 of this same chapter: *"And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley"*—listen to this—*"have chariots of iron, both they who are of Bethshean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel."* (Joshua 17:15–16) Now what they're saying is, "Now, Josh, you're telling us to get rid of these Canaanites, but you just don't understand. They have chariots of iron. These are giants. We can't handle them. We can't tame them like we tamed these others. The ones we have tamed, they're the ones we favor. But these are the ones we fear, and we can't deal with them."

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You see, Satan will come at you in one of two ways: either as an angel of light or as a roaring lion. He will come to entice you, or he'll come to terrify you. There will be Canaanites that you favor, and there will be Canaanites that you fear.

Now the devil has many people convinced that they cannot live in victory. Look up here at your pastor, and I want to tell you something—whether you believe it or not, you're going to hear it: There is no sin that you cannot overcome; no temptation so terrible, no problem, so big, no devilish power so great, that you cannot overcome in the strength of the Spirit of God. Don't get the idea that somehow you are a helpless victim.

Here in America we have bowed down before certain things, and we've said, "There's no use." The drug problem, alcoholism, immorality, criminal behavior: we've come to the place where we say, "We can't handle it, so we'll just legalize it." That's one way to make the crime rate come down and go up at the same time: we legalize these things. We tell little kids, thirteen-year-olds, "Go out with a birth control device in your purse." I mean, "After all, the kids are going to do these things anyway, so what we need to do is just say, 'These problems are too big for us.'" That's what we're told. I want to tell you something, friend: Condoms will fail. Character will not fail.

C. The Canaanites That They Fellowshipped

But there are the Canaanites that we favor, and we think we can use these vices. There are the Canaanites that we fear: they're giants; they have chariots of iron. There's nothing we can do about it. And then, sadly, there are the Canaanites that we fellowship—the Canaanites that we fellowship. I want you to leave Joshua and go to Judges. It tells about the same history—Judges chapter 1, verse 32: *"But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out."* (Judges 1:32) It doesn't say they could not, but *"they did not."* They made good neighbors. They settled down. They dwelt among them. They were living with their pagan neighbors. And if you will read the Bible, before long, they were acting like their pagan neighbors. And what their neighbors were doing didn't seem sinful anymore, and Israel started to live like their enemies that they should have driven out, and began to imitate their ways. They settled down and made peace with the world. They fellowshipped with the world.

Now I'm not saying that we ought to drive out our literal neighbors who don't love Jesus today. We're to witness to them. But I want you to get what I'm talking about now. These Canaanites were demon-possessed people who should have been dispossessed. And they represent the power of Satan, and they represent the power of the world.

Now, what happens? What happens?

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1. Friendship with the World

First of all, there's friendship with the world. James 4:4—listen to it: *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"* (James 4:4) Are you a friend to this world? I'm not talking about, are you a friend to lost people? You ought to be a friend to lost people. They crucified Jesus because He was a friend of sinners. But are you cozy with the ways of this world? There's the friendship of this world. There are certain Canaanites that you fellowship.

2. Love of the World

If you're a friend of the world, then the next step is that you're going to begin to love the world. First John 2, verse 15—the Bible says, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* (1 John 2:15)

3. Conformation to the World

And then, after you are friendly to the world, and begin to love the world, then you'll conform to the world. The Bible says in Romans chapter 12, verse 2, *"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."* (Romans 12:2)

4. Condemnation with the World

And once you are fellowshipping with the world, and then you love the world, and then you're conformed to the world, you'll be condemned with the world. First Corinthians 11, verse 32: *"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."* (1 Corinthians 11:32) You run with the world, and you're headed for problems.

Now here's the whole thing: There was the problem of sinful compromise. Are there some Canaanites in your life? Seriously: Are there sins that you favor, and you think that you can tame them? Are there sins that you fear, and you think you cannot overcome them? Are there sins that you fellowship, and you've made peace with them?

II. The Problem of Self-Confidence

Move to the second point. The second point is this: the problem of self-confidence. We've talked about the problem of sinful compromise, but that is compounded now by self-confidence. Look, if you will now, in this same chapter in verses 14 and 15: *"And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?"* (Joshua 17:14) Now here's a people who are living in self-confidence. Now they were living in sinful compromise, but at the same time—the irony of it—they're boasting about their greatness.

The same thing is true about so many of us. You see, pride is bad enough; but pride

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that lifts its head from the mire of failure is terrible. Here these people were failing to be, do, have, and say what God would have them be, do, say, and have. And they're saying, "Look how great we are!" *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."* (Proverbs 16:18) There's nothing that will put you more out of the reach of the devil than genuine humility. And if you're proud, you're going to find God as an enemy. The Bible says, *"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble"* (James 4:6)—James 4, verse 6. And what is grace? Grace is the desire and the ability to do the will of God.

Now these people so long ago were boasting about their greatness—"We are a great people"—and they failed to drive out these Canaanites. Don't you think that's a little bit of irony? Let me give you some New Testament irony that will match the same thing, in Luke chapter 9. I was stricken by this reading through Luke 9 one time. There was a demon-possessed boy, and the disciples assayed to cast the demons out of this boy—and they failed miserably, ignominiously. And then Jesus came and cast the demons out of this boy, and the disciples could not do it.

Look, if you will, in Luke 9, verses 40 and 41. The man said to Jesus, *"I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither."* (Luke 9:40–41) And Jesus healed this boy—now that was the failure of the disciples—and these disciples did not, because Jesus said by prayer and fasting they could have done the same thing. That's in Luke 9, verses 40 and 41. But now, look in Luke 9, verse 46, and listen to this: *"Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest."* (Luke 9:46) Here they are failing—pitifully failing—and then they're talking about who's going to be the biggest shot in the kingdom, who is going to be the greatest. I tell you, that is absolute irony—the same irony that we find over here in Joshua chapter 17.

III. The Problem of Senseless Clutter

Now here's the third thing and the final thing I want you to see. I want you to see not only the problem of sinful compromise, and the problem of self-confidence. You say, "I thought we were supposed to have self-confidence." That's the last thing we need. We need confidence in Almighty God rather than standing on our big feet, sticking out our big chest, and saying, "Look who I am and how great I am!" I've seen men so full of themselves and so big that God could not use them. I've never seen a man so small that God could not use him. Now here's the third thing—and I'll be finished; and the third thing I want you to see is the problem of senseless clutter—the problem of senseless clutter.

Now what all of this is about is this: that the tribe of Joseph and these others came

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to Joshua and said, “Now, Joshua, look: we are a great people, and we want to grow. We want big things done for us, and we don’t have enough room. Why, there are so many trees and so many Canaanites. Joshua, what we want is more land.” Now, notice what Joshua said here in Joshua chapter 17, verse 17: *“And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only:”*—but now, watch this—*“but the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood,”*—plain English: “it is a forest”—*“and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.”* (Joshua 17:17–18)

Now, what was Joshua’s solution to these people, these people who had a land infested with Canaanites: Canaanites they favored, Canaanites they feared, and Canaanites they fellowshipped? These people who are so boastful—these people who said, “We are great people,” what did Joshua tell them to do? Joshua said, “You see that mountain over there? You want more land? You want a bigger inheritance? Get you some axes and cut down those trees that clutter that mountain. There’s plenty of room here, but you’re going to have to clear out those trees.” Joshua is saying, “Why should you have more land?” Listen to me, church. “Why should you have more land, until you’ve dealt with the land that I have given you, until you have cleared what I’ve given you?” What he’s saying is “First things first.”

How many in this auditorium would like a bigger opportunity? Well, let me ask you a question: What are you doing with the opportunity that God’s already given you? How many of you would like a bigger Sunday School class? What are you doing with the class that God has already given you? We have some preacher boys here tonight: How many of you would like to have a bigger church? What are you doing with the opportunity that God has given you? You want a bigger job? What are you doing on the job that you have? You want more money? What are you doing with the money that you have? What would you do if you had a million dollars? I’ll tell you what you’d do if you had a million dollars: You’d do the same thing with the hundred dollars that you have. *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.”* (Luke 16:10)

And people say, “Well, I want to be a missionary.” Well, you think two thousand miles of ocean is going to make you a missionary? If you’re not winning souls here, why should you go overseas and do nothing? What Joshua is saying: “Look, you’re asking for more opportunity. You’re asking for a bigger place. You see that mountain? Go clear it up.”

Now, let me show you the two-fold priority. I’m talking about not settling for less than the best.

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A. Clear Out the Harmless Things That Clutter Your Life

First of all, we must clear out the harmless things that clutter our lives—clear out the harmless things that clutter our lives. There's nothing wrong with trees. Trees are beautiful. But if you want to build a farm, or you want to put out pastureland, or you want to build a house, or whatever you need, then you've got to clear the ground.

Now the reason that many people are not living in victory is their lives are cluttered. You don't have enough time for prayer. You don't have enough time for Bible study. Is that what you say? Well, if you don't have enough time for prayer and Bible study, you're doing something you ought not to do. Can you say *amen* to that? I don't know what it is, but I will guarantee you, if you don't have time to read your Bible and pray, you're doing something God never assigned you to do. There's something cluttering your life. And what is cluttering your life may not be a harmful thing—overtly harmful; it may not be a sinful, wicked thing. But if it is cluttering your life, you need to get rid of it.

There's enough time in every day to do gracefully everything God wants you to do.

You say, "Well, pastor, then I need to find time." No, you don't. You need take time; you need to make time. And the way you make time and take time is to clear the clutter out of your life. It might be television. It might be church work. It would be better for you to stay home from church to study your Bible and pray than to miss your Bible study and prayer and come to church. Now I know all the educational staff say, "Pastor, you just ruined us." No, I haven't, because you don't have to choose between coming to church and studying your Bible. There's enough time to do both. There's enough time to do everything that God wants us to do. But what we have to do sometimes is just get the clutter out of our lives. Some people are so busy doing good they don't have time to be godly, to get alone with God. You don't waste any time when you're at Jesus's feet.

B. Clean Out the Harmful Things That Corrupt Your Life

What I'm saying is, step number one: You must clear out the harmless things that clutter your life—verse 15. (Joshua 17:15) And then, clean out the harmful things that corrupt your life. There are the harmless things that clutter your life—harmless; and then, there are the harmful things that corrupt your life. But which comes first? Which comes first: cutting down trees or fighting Canaanites? You may be surprised, but God's order is first cut down the trees, and then drive out the Canaanites. That's what God says: first the trees, and then the giants. In other words, what God is saying is, "Get the clutter out of your life. Get down to worship. Worship comes before work; worship comes before warfare—these things that clutter your life, when the good becomes the enemy of the best." And what you do then is establish a beachhead. You say, "I'm going to make time for the things that count. I'm going to have a beachhead to fight against these Canaanites."

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Conclusion

Now, would you be all that you ought to be? Do you want to live in victory this coming year? Are you compromising? Are there Canaanites that you favor, little harmless sins you think, "This is good for me"? Are there Canaanites that you fear, saying, "I'll never have victory in this area"? Are there Canaanites that you fellowship with—you've just made peace with them? You live this way, and now you've become accustomed to it, and then conform to this world. And at the same time, is there that self-confidence: you think you're great and big and fine, and don't see your great need? Are there things that clutter your life? Are there things that you need to say, "This goes, and this goes, and this goes; it may be a tree—a harmless tree—but it keeps me from being what I ought to be"?

Now I want to make a confession to you: In thinking about this scripture and dealing with this scripture, I'm having to deal with my own life. And I don't know whether that makes you feel better or worse about your pastor; but this coming year I want to clear some wood. I want to get those harmless things that clutter my life out so I can clean out the harmful things that would corrupt my life: get rid of the Canaanites. Wouldn't you like that? You see, listen: God's plan for you—I want to say it again—God's plan for you is victory.

Now the problem with a sermon like this is this: that you'll treat it as a sermon. You'll say, "Well, what did you think of the sermon tonight?" I don't care what you think about the sermon. That's not the big point—that's not the big point. Listen. When you listen to a sermon, there are two ways to listen to it: You listen to what the pastor says to the congregation. And then, you listen to what God has said to you. You may not remember all the points. You may not get all the Scripture down. You may not remember all the little sayings. If you can, fine; but if you have a heart and mind and ears tonight, God has spoken to you. You look at a passage of Scripture—remember, again: you ask, "What does it mean? How does it apply today? And what does it mean to me personally?" *"All these things happened unto them for examples"* unto us. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

You say, "Pastor, I wish I knew more of the Bible." Oh, do you? Well, what are you doing with the part of the Bible that God has already shown you? Why should God give you more knowledge if you've not lived up to the light, the knowledge, that you have? Let me give you an example of that. There are some of you have trusted Christ as your personal Savior and you have never followed Jesus in the water of believer's baptism like these did tonight. And yet you'll open the Bible, and you'll say, "God, show me what this means." Now I want to ask you a question: Why should God show you anything if you've not obeyed what He already shown you? Why should God give you more land if you've not cleared the land that God's already given you? That's the point. Why should

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God give you more land? Some of you are saying, “I wish I had more resources, more money.” What are you doing with the money you have now? How faithful are you? Most of us have about all God can trust us with.

Friend, listen to me. Get rid of the things that clutter your life so you can clean up the things that corrupt your life and live in victory. Victory is not just some slogan; it’s not just some preacher-talk. I’m telling you that you are to live in victory day by day by day: constantly, conspicuously, continuously living in victory.

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Maximum Living

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 27, 1977 Time: 00AM

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 17:12–18

"Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land."
JOSHUA 17:12

Outline

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I. The Problem of Partial Possession
  A. The Canaanites They Favored
  B. The Canaanites They Feared
II. The Problem of Paralyzing Pride
III. The Problem of Perverted Priorities
  C. Remove the Things That Clutter Our Lives
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Introduction

Now, take your Bibles and turn to Joshua. How did you know that? All right, chapter 17—Joshua chapter 17. We're on a journey with Joshua, conquering Canaan, and Canaan pictures to us the fullness of the believer's life, the victory that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Old Testament is God's book of illustrations of New Testament truths and New Testament victory. The Bible says, *"Now all these things happened unto them for examples"* (1 Corinthians 10:11).

And, we begin reading now in Joshua 17, verse 12: *"Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, but did not utterly drive them out. And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto? And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of*

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iron, both they who are of Bethshean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel. And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only: but the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong" (Joshua 17:12–18).

Now, there are three persons who are sitting in your seat this morning. You say, "I wondered why it was so crowded." There are three persons sitting in your seat this morning. First of all, there is the person you are at this moment, and then there is the person that you could be for evil. Now, no one, perhaps, realizes just how wicked he could be if he took his eyes off the Lord Jesus. Did you know that there is no sin of the flesh that you're not capable of committing if you take your eyes off Jesus, even though you're a Christian? Did you know that? You'd better learn that about you. *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"* (Jeremiah 17:9); and, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh"* (John 3:6), even though you've been born again. And, even though you have God's Holy Spirit dwelling in you, if you cease to abide in Him, and you take your eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ, you would be amazed at the potentiality for evil that there is lurking within your heart.

I remember reading in the Bible, in the Old Testament, about a man it was prophesied of him that he would commit all kinds of atrocities—horrible things. And, that man said, "Am I a dog that I would do such a thing?" (2 Kings 8:13). And then, he did it—and then, he did it. There is that person who is capable of much evil who is sitting right in your seat.

And then also, many of us have not begun to imagine how that person who is sitting in our seats could be used for good. Oh, dear friend, the person you could be for God, the person you could be for righteousness, the love that you could show, the faith that you could manifest, the work that you could do, the things that you could achieve for Jesus Christ, you have little dreamt what you could be for God.

There are three persons sitting in your seat this morning. I want to talk about that third person, the person you could be. I want us to think today about "Maximum Living"—"Maximum Living." And, that's what we'll call our message, reaching your potential, living to the capacity, as God wants us to live. So many of us are not maximum Christians, so many of us are not all we could be, all we ought to be, oh, bless God, all we will be, God grant it.

All right, these people of Manasseh are an illustration for us today of some who failed to reach their potential. There are some who fail to maximize their lives, and I want us to see why they failed, and learn a lesson.

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I. The Problem of Partial Possession

There were three problems that these children of Manasseh had when they failed to reach their potential. In the first place, their first failure was this: They failed to completely possess their possessions. It was the problem of partial possession. Have you got that? The problem of partial possession.

Look in verse 12: *"Yet…"*—just underscore the word *yet*—*"Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land"* (Joshua 17:12). They were keeping company with Canaanites, and God said, "Drive out the Canaanites." Now, who are the Canaanites? To us, the Canaanites represent the power of Satan. Remember that the Canaanites were demon-worshipers and God said they were to be utterly driven out. They were to be dispossessed, so that God's children could inherit the land. Now, remember the land speaks of the fullness that we have in Christ, the Canaanites speak of the power of Satan that keeps us sometimes from living to the maximum and fulfilling our potentiality.

You know, you're always going to be in trouble if you keep company with Canaanites. I heard one time about a pastor who found an old drunk on the street and took him home, afraid he was going to get hurt. And, he took the drunk to the door of the apartment and said, "Now, I think you can make it from there." And, the old drunk said, "Well, sir, if you don't mind, I'd like for you to come in." And, the pastor said, "Why?" He said, "I want my wife to see who I've been keeping company with."

Well, some of us have been keeping company with Canaanites, and we have no business keeping company with Canaanites. And, what do I mean by *Canaanites*? I mean, sins that are in our lives that we ought to be victorious over, but we're not victorious. Do you know what God's plan for Manasseh was? It was complete victory. Did you know what God wants you to have? Complete victory. "Oh," you say, "Adrian Rogers, victory is impossible." Well, as long as you feel it is, it will be. But the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 57: *"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15:57).

God's plan for you is complete victory. You are to be living victoriously. Do you know what General Douglas MacArthur said, when he came back from Korea? And, by the way, I like Douglas MacArthur; I mean, he was one of my heroes, he really was. Douglas MacArthur said, "In war, there is no substitute for victory." That's from a general's viewpoint. Now, you think about that: "In war, there is no substitute for victory."

Ladies and gentlemen, we are in a war, and there must be no compromise, no substitute for victory. Oh, there is an alternative—that's defeat; but there's no substitute—there's to be no backing up, no letting up—no substitute for victory over the world. We're not here to make peace with the world, to get along with the world; we're to overcome the world. And, a worldly Christian is a traitor to his Lord. Are you a worldly

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Christian?

I want to say there's no substitute for victory over the flesh. We're not here to condone the flesh; we're here to crucify the flesh, and our flesh is not to be dictating to us. We're to be living victoriously not over the world, but over the flesh; and not over the world and the flesh, but over the devil. The devil is like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). You don't sit down to a peace conference with a roaring lion. Either you get the lion or he gets you. We are not to sit down and peacefully coexist with Satan; we are to have complete victory. You are to be living in victory. In war, there is no substitute for victory—over the world, over the flesh, over the devil.

God's plan for His people in the Book of Joshua was that they were to utterly drive out the Canaanites—completely. They were to be victorious, but they were not—they were not. They settled down and started to keep company with Canaanites. And, I want you to notice the two kinds of Canaanites they kept company with.

A. The Canaanites They Favored

First of all, there were the Canaanites that they favored. I want you to look, if you will, in verse 13. Are you watching? Joshua 17, verse 13: *"Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, but did not utterly drive them out"* (Joshua 17:13).

Now, when the Israelites got fairly strong, they said, "Well, there's no reason to get rid of these particular Canaanites. Rather than driving them out, we'll make slaves out of them. And, rather than getting rid of them, we'll make them pay taxes. That is, we'll use these Canaanites; we will be better off with them in the land." And, there were the Canaanites they favored.

Do you have a Canaanite that you're showing favor to? Is there some sin in your life that you think you're better off with? Perhaps some companion that God has told you to get rid of? You know, the Bible says, *"A companion of fools shall be destroyed"* (Proverbs 13:20). Is there some questionable business practice?

You say, "Well, I think I'm strong enough; I can handle it." Is there some habit that you think somehow enhances your life? Do you have some Canaanite that you're favoring, that's paying tribute to you, that you've made a slave of that sin? You say, "Well, ha, it hasn't enslaved me. I'm pretty strong; I can take it or leave it." Come to think of it, that's all anybody can do, amen? You take it or leave it. I mean, what big deal! I noticed, though, that most of them who can take it or leave it, they always take it. You know, they say, "Well, I've got victory over this thing." But, I wonder who really has victory over you. But, you think that you're strong enough, that you can control certain Canaanites.

In Texas, I heard of a family who had a little lion cub that somehow they'd gotten, and they thought they would raise it as a pet, and they kept it in the apartment. But, one

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night they stepped across the hall to visit in the adjoining apartment, and when they stepped back in, they heard a strange noise in the nursery, and went in there and saw that that lion cub had eaten several fingers from the hand of their own little baby. Can you imagine such a thing? Can you imagine how they felt about that lion cub, having kept it there in the house as a pet, thinking it was something they could control?

I wonder, do you have some pet sin that's going to rise up and devour something precious in your life? There were certain Canaanites that they favored, certain Canaanites they thought they could control. They said, "We're strong; we're waxen strong, and we'll make these Canaanites pay tribute."

B. **The Canaanites They Feared**

All right, there were the Canaanites they favored, and then there was another class of Canaanites—look in verse 16. These are the Canaanites they feared. *"And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron"* (Joshua 17:16).

Now, these are the ones they didn't think they could drive out. They were in a mess, weren't they? Here was a partial possession. They had not taken the land that God had given them to take; they had not possessed it because there some Canaanites they favored, and some Canaanites they feared, some sins they made peace with, and other sins they thought that they could not overcome at all. Is that the way you are? Are there certain things in your life you say, "I can handle that," and so you don't get rid of them; other things in your life you say, "I can't handle that," and so you don't get rid of that either? There are just certain problems in your life, certain sins that *"have chariots of iron."*

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if you're a Christian, if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, if you are obeying the Word of God, there is no sin that should have dominion over you—not one, not one. There is no sin so strong, there is no temptation so terrible, there is no problem so powerful that the child of God cannot overcome in the power of the Holy Spirit. And, if there is, I might as well close my Bible and never preach again. You cannot say, "The devil made me do it." He can't make you do it—he can't. The Bible says, *"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory…"* (1 Corinthians 15:57). *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

And, the reason that many people are not living maximum lives, the reason that many people are not reaching their potential, there is the tragedy, the tragedy of partial possession. There are Canaanites that we fail to drive out: Canaanites that we favor, and Canaanites that we fear. God is wanting to give you victory over every sin.

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Did you know that as you're sitting here this morning you ought to be able to say, "I thank God there is no unconfessed, unrepented of sin in my life? Thank God there is absolutely no sin that is holding me in its grip. I thank God that Jesus Christ has set me free." *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36). And, Jesus Christ did not come to save you in your sins; He came to save you from your sin.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1–2). I'm not talking about sinless perfection, but I am talking about a life of victory where God's people are no longer slaves to sin—sins that they favor, and sins that they fear. Oh, the tragedy that some who are listening to me today, who name the name of Jesus, who have entered into Canaan, are still keeping company with Canaanites that should have been moved out a long time ago!

II. The Problem of Paralyzing Pride

Now, not only is there the tragedy of partial possession, but there's also the tragedy of paralyzing pride. I want you to notice another thing that keeps people from reaching their potential. Look in verse 14: *"And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people…"—"I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto"* (Joshua 17:14). These same people who are unable to drive out the Canaanites, these same people who were unable to possess the lot that God had already given them, were now asking for more. They hadn't even possessed what they had, but they were saying, "I am so great that I need a bigger place. I need a bigger lot. I need a bigger possession. Give me more. *'I am a great people.'*"

Now, folks, there's one other thing that will keep us from living maximum lives, and it is paralyzing pride, pride where we think that we have arrived. You see, if you think that you're what you ought to be, you never will be what you ought to be. The reason that the Apostle Paul was such a great Christian, he said, "not that I've already attained or were already perfect," but Paul said, "I'm pressing on" (Philippians 3:12). I'm pressing on. There's more, and I want it.

Are you satisfied with your life right now? Do you feel in a very real sense that you are all that you ought to be, and you're wondering why God is not giving you more possessions? You're wondering why God is not giving you bigger opportunities. You're wondering why God is not pouring more blessings on you, because, after all, you're pretty great, aren't you? No wonder, no wonder we fail to live maximum lives. We're paralyzed by pride. What a blighting, damning sin is pride, and what a deceptive sin is pride.

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You know, there's a benefit and a bliss to some other sins—at least the person who commits them knows that he's committing them; at least the drunkard knows he's a drunkard, the thief knows he's a thief—but have you ever heard of a proud person who ever realized that he was a proud person?

Do you know how a proud person talks? He says, "Well, I'm pretty humble." That's right, he's proud of his humility; he's got high-class humility. Like that preacher who prepared a sermon on humility, but he hadn't found a crowd big enough to preach it to. We're pretty proud of our humility.

I heard about a man, they gave him a medal for humility and then took it away from him when he wore it. Humility is deceptive—it really is. We're always thinking that we're not proud. You know, like that Sunday School teacher who taught the Sunday School lesson about the publican and the Pharisee. And, you remember the publican and the Pharisee went to the temple to pray and the Pharisee stood and prayed with himself, the Bible says. Of course it was with himself—God wasn't there. He prayed with himself, and said, "*God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are"* (Luke 18:11); I tithe, I fast, I do this, and I do that." And, he said, "I especially thank you that I'm not like this ole' publican."

Now, the publican was a tax gatherer, a tax collector, but the publican was over there in the corner, and Jesus said that he bowed his head, *"but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner"* (Luke 18:13). Actually, the Greek says, "Be merciful to me, *the* sinner." He thought he was the chief of all sinners: *"God be merciful to me a sinner."* And, Jesus said, *"This man went down to his house justified rather than the other…"* (Luke 18:14). Two men went to church; one went home dignified, and one went home justified. Oh, there'll be a lot of folks who go home dignified today because they're too rotten proud to confess their need to the Lord and let the Lord justify them.

And, the Sunday School teacher taught this lesson, and she did a pretty good job until she got to the end. And, after she finished telling her boys and girls about the publican and the Pharisee, then she said, "And, boys and girls, aren't we thankful we're not like that ole' Pharisee?"

You know, this thing of pride is a devilish thing, but I want to tell you something, friend. The Bible says, in the Book of 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 5, that *"God resisteth the proud"* (1 Peter 5:5). You know, I've been to some of our state conventions, and I hear some of our people get up, and they say, "Our great convention, our great program, our great…" I believe it makes God want to vomit. If there were ever a people that ought to be on their face, it's us before Almighty God. "Oh, give me more—I'm a great people." I want to tell you, we're boasting and bragging about our greatness, and the world is caving in on our heads. God has said, *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then*

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will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Do you know where America needs to be right now? On her face before God. We need to be crying and squalling before God, and saying, "O God, have mercy upon us!" We don't reach our maximum and we don't live maximum lives, number one, because of partial possession—we're keeping company with Canaanites; and, number two, because of paralyzing pride. And, I don't think pride is ever more unseemly than when it raises it's head out of the muck and mire of failure. Here they were, failing to possess their possessions on the one hand, and on the next hand saying, "What a great people I am!"

III. The Problem of Perverted Priorities

Now, the third reason that we fail to live maximum lives, the third reason that we fail to reach our potential, is not only because of partial possession, and not only because of paralyzing pride, but because of perverted priorities—perverted priorities. We get our priorities wrong.

You see, I want you to read now, beginning in verse 17: *"And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people…"*—I think there's a very strong note of irony here, and almost sarcasm—*"Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only:"*—that is, there's room for you to grow—*"but the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down:"*—now, what he means is, "I've already given you the mountain, and it's a forest; and, you're to clear the forest"—*"and the outgoings of it shall be thine:"*—that is, "The valley all around it shall be thine"—*"for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong"* (Joshua 17:17–18).

Now, God's solution for these people who said, "This land is not big enough for me; I need bigger land; I need a greater opportunity because I'm a great people," God said to them, "Before you ask for more, and before you get more territory, you get your priorities straight, and you take care of that which I have already given you." God's answer was very simple. They said, "I want more land. I want a bigger opportunity. I want more blessings. I want more, more, more." And, God says, "You take care of what I've already given you, and, when you take care of what I've already given you—when you clear the forest, and when you drive out the giants and the Canaanites—then you'll have more."

You say, "Does that apply to us today?" Boy, how does it! You'd be surprised how many people are sitting here saying, "Oh, I want to know more of the Bible—I want to know more of the Bible. Teach me more of the Bible." Do you know the reason I can't teach some of you more of the Bible is because you're not obeying a part of the Bible

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you already know. You want to understand God's Word, you want God to open up your mind, and pour our of His treasure house of knowledge more of His Word to you, then you start obeying the part that you do know. "For to him that hath shall be given" (Matthew 25:29).

Somebody says, "Oh, I wish I had more money." Do you know why you don't have more money? Well, I'm not sure why all people don't have more money, but *I'll tell you why some Christians don't have more than they have: because they've got all God can trust them with right now.*

"Oh," you say, "I wish I had a million dollars." What would you do with a million dollars? Oh, you say, "I'd do this; I'd do that." I tell you, if you had a million dollars, you'd do with that million what you're doing with that hundred dollars. Friend, if you're not interested in missions, and if you are not faithful in tithing with a hundred dollars, you wouldn't be, if you had a million dollars. The Bible says, *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much"* (Luke 16:10). And, the reason that we don't have much is, many times, we've not been faithful with little. And, why should God give us more? Why should God give us more land? Why should God give us more territory?

We say, "O God, I want a bigger opportunity." Some of you preacher boys who are here, you say, "I want a big church." You be faithful where you are, and, when you've done what God's called you to do in that church, maybe you'll have a big church. But, I want to tell you, it'll take another world to show where the big churches are anyway, and some of the biggest churches may be out there in the country. I want you to know that.

I want to say, ladies and gentlemen, that, if you want bigger opportunities and better opportunities, you'd better start clearing the forest where you are. You know, it's amazing what people ask for. They want God to give them this. They wouldn't know what to do with it, if God gave it to them. What would these people have done with more land, when they couldn't take care of the land that God already given them? They're like a dog chasing a truck—they wouldn't know what to do with it, if they caught it. "O God, I want a bigger opportunity. God, give me more land." We need to maximize what we have, to understand that right where we are there are opportunities—glorious opportunities, wonderful opportunities.

Some of you are wanting a better job. O God, I just hate my job. I want a bigger job, a better job. Well, let me tell you one clue to getting one: You go back to your job Monday morning and you do that job like it's never been done before. You put everything you have into it. You say, "Oh, that ole' two-legged rascal I work for." Let me tell you something, friend: You're not working for him; you're working for Jesus Christ. And, the Bible says, *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men"* (Colossians 3:23); *"not with eyeservice, as menpleasers"* (Colossians 3:22).

You cut down the trees where you are, you drive out the giants where you are, you

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live to a maximum capacity with what God has already given you, and then God can be free to give you more. Are you maximizing the potential that God has given you? Are you living to capacity? If not, why not? The reason that some are not doing it is that we're just plain lazy—sitting and wishing won't change your fate. The Lord provides the fishing, but you must dig the bait. Now, God will give you a bigger opportunity, and God will increase your capacity, when you live up to the capacity that He's already given you.

As I close, I want us to notice two things that the Lord told them to do. Now, watch—we're talking about getting our priorities right. Notice the two-fold priority.

A. Remove the Things That Clutter Our Lives

First of all, look in verse 18: *"But the mountain shall be thine;"*—now, he'd already given them this mountain—*"for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down"* (Joshua 17:18). The first thing He told them to do was to clear the forest, that's the first thing; that is, chop down the trees.

Now, there's nothing wrong with trees—that is, unless you want to build a house where they are standing; that is, unless you want to grow corn where they're standing, or grow wheat where they're standing, or put in a vineyard where they're standing, or build a road where they're standing, and then the trees have to come down. Trees are beautiful things; trees are harmless things; and, there is shade in the trees. But, you see, if the trees are cluttering the land, then you have no right to say, "There's not enough room." There's plenty of room, if you cut down the trees.

And, you see, the first thing Joshua is saying to these people who wanted more was to, "Get the things that clutter your life out of your life. Get the things that clutter your life out of your life." They needed to clear out the harmless things that cluttered their life. Have you done that? I'm not talking about the hurtful things, now. I'm talking about the harmless things. I'm talking about the trees. They just clutter your life.

You know, folks say, "Well, I just don't have enough time." That's a lie. We have plenty of time. There's enough time in every day to do gracefully everything God wants us to do. And, did you know that it's an insult and a libel to God, when you say, "I don't have time"?

Some of us say, "I don't have time to read my Bible. Oh, I wish I were a preacher like Dr. Rogers. Then I could just study my Bible. Oh, I don't have time to pray. I don't have time to witness." Friend, *God gives everybody twenty-four hours a day, and you have enough time in every day to do gracefully everything God wants you to do.* But, do you know the reason that some of us are not doing the things that God wants us to do? We have failed to clear out the things that clutter our lives. You see, it's not that we need more time; we need to chop down some trees, and some of those trees may be football games, amen? Watch it—late night television, sitting around a table eating, maybe business, maybe church work.

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Did you know that doing church work is not a substitute for your quiet time with God? And, some of us are so busy being good we don't have time to be holy—did you know that?—being alone with Almighty God. There are things that clutter our lives, and the axe needs to be laid to the root of the tree, and we need to clear the woods. Don't say you can't do it; don't say that you need a bigger opportunity; don't say that you need more room and more time. God has given you plenty of all that you need.

B. Remove the Things That Corrupt Our Lives

Number one, we need to remove the things that clutter our lives; then, number two, we need to remove the things that corrupt our lives. Now, go on and look in verse 18: *"But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites"* (Joshua 17:18). And, there you have the two types of things that keep us from being all we ought to be: the things that clutter our lives, and the things that corrupt our lives.

The Canaanites—the Canaanites that we favor, and the Canaanites that we fear—are to be driven out of our lives. And, you say, "But, hasn't God gotten it backwards? Don't you think that first of all, Brother Rogers, that we ought to drive out the Canaanites, and then clean up the woods?" That's not the way Joshua told it. As a matter of fact, folks, before you get ready to do a battle, you'd better clear off a spot to fight from. There might be a Canaanite in those trees.

You know, it'll be a great day in our lives when we learn that worship comes before warfare. You know, it's far more important for you to get the things out of your life that clutter your life so that you can just spend some time with God, learning what God wants you to know, storing up, getting yourself strong, getting yourself fortified, establishing a beachhead, and then, and only then, can you go out and drive out the Canaanites, the Canaanites that corrupt our lives.

Conclusion

Don't you want to be a maximum Christian? Don't you want to live to your full potential? Wouldn't you like to be all that you could be? Well, friend, don't be like the children of Manasseh, children who fail to possess their possessions. And, they had the tragedy of a partial possession, the tragedy, on top of that, of a paralyzing pride, and, on top of that, perverted priorities, wanting more before they'd taken care of what they already had. Let's bow in prayer.

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Christ Our Refuge

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 20, 1977 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 20:1–3

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses."
JOSHUA 20:2

Outline

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I. The Nature of the Cities of Refuge
II. The Names of the Cities of Refuge
  A. Kedesh
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III. The Nearness of the Cities of Refuge
Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, would you please, to Joshua chapter 20—Joshua chapter 20. We're continuing our journey with Joshua, "Conquering Canaan"—Joshua chapter 20. And, I want to say that all of the Bible is about Jesus. Do you believe that? All of the Bible is about Jesus, not just part of it.

Do you know what some people mistakenly think? They think that the Old Testament is about Moses and the prophets, and the New Testament is about Jesus. But, folks, all of the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the hero of this book, and if you read the Bible and you don't see the story of Jesus, you'd better reread the Bible. Standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus.

Do you remember when Jesus was walking on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection with those two disciples, and He began to expound to them the Word of God? And, the Bible says, *"he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"* (Luke 24:27). And, incidentally, the Scriptures at that time were the Old Testament. And, He showed *"them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."* Not all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures, but *"in all the scriptures*

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the things concerning himself." Jesus said, *"Search the scriptures; for…they are they which testify of me"* (John 5:39). And, He was talking there about the Old Testament.

Now, you may think that the Book of Joshua is a book of history, but friend, it's His story; it's about the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you're going to find Jesus here in the Book of Joshua just like you'd find Him in any book in the Bible; if you'll look for Him, you'll find the Lord Jesus Christ there. Someone speaks about the four Gospels. There are not four Gospels; there are 66 Gospels, starting with Genesis, and ending with Revelation—they all, in some way, tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ. And, what a wonderful picture of Jesus we find in Joshua chapter 20! And, our sermon title today is "Christ Our Refuge"—"Christ Our Refuge."

Beginning in verse 1: *"The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood"* (Joshua 20:1).

Special cities were to be set up called *cities of refuge*. And, I want us to notice three things about those cities today. And, we'll just hang our thoughts on those three things. First of all, I want you to notice the nature of these cities; secondly, the names of these cities; and thirdly, the nearness of these cities.

I. The Nature of the Cities of Refuge

I want you to notice, first of all, the nature of these cities, in verse 2: *"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge"* (Joshua 10:2). Well, why would a person need a city of refuge, a city to flee into? Well, in that time, they did not have the complicated court system and law enforcement system that we have today. And, many times, a man might unknowingly, or unwittingly, or carelessly, put his friend to death—maybe a farming accident, maybe he's clearing land and the tree falls on someone, or maybe he rolls a stone on someone, or somehow he kills another person.

Well, in that day, it was the custom for one called a *gaal*, or "an avenger of blood"—a close relative to seek out the person who had done the killing, and put him to death. Well, if you didn't mean to kill someone, and you were not a cold-blooded murderer, you needed somewhere to go to for sanctuary; you needed somewhere to go for safety; you needed somewhere to go for refuge, until the matter could be settled appropriately, and until you had an opportunity to tell your side of the story, and for the judges to hear this thing out.

And so, they called these *cities of refuge*, and that was the nature of the city. But, they speak to us prophetically, and in type, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn to Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 18, if you will, for a moment, and there we're going to see something that's very wonderful. God speaks of the great promises that are ours—the

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great security that is ours—and He says, *"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie…"*—did you know that's something God can't do, is tell a lie? That it's—*"impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"* (Hebrews 6:18). And, I believe the writer of Hebrews, writing to the Hebrews, who are conversant with these things, is saying, just as those cities were cities of refuge in the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed our city of refuge.

Now, it's very interesting that the city of refuge was for a person who had killed, as the Bible said, *"unawares and unwittingly"* (Joshua 20:3). Look in verse 3: *"That the slayer that killeth any person unawares…"*—this is Joshua 20—*"unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood"* (Joshua 20:3). This is was not a refuge for cold-blooded calculated murder, but it was for a person who was guilty of what we would say today is *manslaughter*. Here was a person who had indeed put another person to death, but he did it *"unawares,"* or perhaps *"unwittingly,"* or, as we would say, perhaps by carelessness. Now, he's guilty, but not as guilty as though it were premeditated, cold-blooded murder.

You see, let me just speak to you of how this applies to you today, and how it applies to me. Why would I need a city of refuge? Because I'm guilty of someone's death, and so are you. And, the person of whose death we're guilty is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You and I helped put Jesus on that cross. We crucified the Lord Jesus Christ.

You and I know there are some people who kind of get their hackles up when you say that. They say, "Oh, I didn't do that, and I wouldn't have done that. I would never have held that hammer; I would never have driven those nails." And, that's probably true. Not in that sense of the word, you would not; but you were still guilty of His death. We did it in kind of a strange way. We did it unwittingly; we did it unknowingly. Do you remember, when Jesus was on the cross, He prayed, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34)? Oh, we were guilty. We needed forgiveness. We needed a place of refuge.

But, there's another kind of a person who crucifies the Lord Jesus Christ. There is another person, with malice, and premeditation, and deliberateness, who crucifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and that man doesn't get any city of refuge. I want you to turn again to the Book of Hebrews, chapter 10, if you will, for just a moment. These are some of the most fearful scriptures in all of the Bible, in my estimation—Hebrews chapter 10, beginning in verse 26: *"For if we sin wilfully"*—willfully, now—*"after that we have received the knowledge of the truth…"*—we're not talking about a person, now, who doesn't know what he's doing—*"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,"*— there's no city of

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refuge for a man like this—*"but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people"* (Hebrews 10:26–30).

What does this Scripture tell us? It tells us, dear friend, that though we have been guilty of the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior, because we did it in ignorance, because we did it in stupidity, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to say, *"Father, forgive them"* (Luke 23:34). And, thank God, thank God, there is a city of refuge.

But, I want to tell you, if, with your eyes wide open, you deliberately, callously reject the Lord Jesus Christ, and trample beneath your feet His precious blood, there is no hope for you, there is no city of refuge for you. But, I'm so glad there is a place to which I may flee for refuge—His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. The nature of these cities: they were cities of refuge.

II. The Names of the Cities of Refuge

Now, I want you to think a little bit about the names of these cities with me for a moment. Would you look again in Joshua chapter 20, and we'll begin reading in verse 7: *"And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh"* (Joshua 20:7–8). Six cities, and these cities have, of course, six names. And, in the Bible, names often have a very definite significance, and the names of cities have very real meaning.

Well, we do the same thing today. What does *Philadelphia* mean? It means "brotherly love." And so, if some historian sat down, were to go back and look back after couple of thousand years, and unearth our records, they would say, "They had a city, and the name of that city was Philadelphia. And, the meaning of that name was 'brotherly love.'"

A. Kedesh

Now, all of these cities have names that have meanings, and all of these meanings tell us something about the Lord Jesus Christ who is our refuge. And so, I want us to look at them. The first city that we see, in chapter 20, verse 7, is Kedesh—Kedesh—and that

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means “a place of holiness”—“a place of holiness.” Aren’t you glad that our city of refuge is a place of holiness? Christ is our holiness.

You know, the Bible tells us, in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14: *“holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Hebrews 12:14). Oh, well, how holy are you? Anybody here want to stand up and say, “In my own self, in my own strength, the life I live is a holy life”? Not a one of us would dare do that. Not a one of us would have the audacity to put our puny, sinful, paltry lives up alongside of the life of the thrice-holy God of Israel; we know we’re not holy. But yet, God says, “Without holiness no man shall see God.”

Well, how are we going to get any holiness, friend? It must be given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, it is an imputed holiness. Don’t you like that passage of Scripture that says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21: *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Isn’t that terrific?

You see, today, you’re looking at a holy man. I am holy. Tommy Lane is holy. Not in and of myself: “In my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling.” I have a city of refuge. And, I’ve come in, and that city has made me holy—not in myself, but Jesus’ holiness has been given unto me. Christ is therefore my Savior. That’s what Kedesh tells me.

B. **Shechem**

Now, look at the next city, and that city is Shechem—Shechem. And, do you know what *Shechem* means? That means “shoulder.” *Shechem* means, “shoulder,” and it designates strength or support. Do you remember the story of the good shepherd who went out and found the lost sheep? And, the Bible says there in Luke 15: *“He layeth it on his shoulders,”* and he bringeth it back (Luke 15:5). Do you remember that passage of Scripture in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, where the Bible says of the Lord Jesus Christ, *“And the government shall be upon his shoulder”* (Isaiah 9:6)?

You see, His strong and mighty shoulders. This tells us that Christ not only is our Savior who gives us holiness, but Christ is our strength who carries us along and who bears us along. Are you feeling weak today? You just feel that you can’t live the Christian life? God never asked you to live the Christian life; He wants to be your strength, He wants to live it in you, and through you, and do for you what you could never do for yourself.

C. **Hebron**

I want you to look at the next city here. The name of this city is Hebron. We studied about that last week. Do you remember Hebron was where the grapes did grow and the milk and the honey did flow? And, Hebron is that luscious, glorious, beautiful mountain,

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and it also was a city of refuge. And, the name *Hebron* means "fellowship and fullness"—"fellowship and fullness."

And, do you know what that tells me about the Lord Jesus Christ? Not only is He Christ my Savior, and Christ my strength; He is Christ my satisfaction. Oh, yes He is—He is. The Bible says, in 1 John chapter 1, verse 3: *"Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3). And, you don't have to feel sorry for Adrian Rogers this morning because he's a Christian. I want to tell you I'm having such a glorious, wonderful time loving and serving my dear Savior. And, I'm so delighted to be living on the mountaintop of fellowship, the city of refuge.

D. **Bezer**

Yes, Kedesh tells us that Christ is the Savior; Shechem tells us that Christ is the strength; Hebron tells us that Christ is the satisfaction of the Christian. And then, what about Bezer? What does *Bezer* mean? Well, *Bezer* is a name that means "stronghold" or "fortification." Somebody asked a little boy, what is a fortification? He said, "It's two *twenty-fications*." Fortification" is what *Bezer* means. And, what does that tell us? Well, not only is Christ our satisfaction—that's Hebron; but Christ is our security. Oh, I found a hiding place in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Psalmist said, *"God is our refuge and strength"* (Psalm 46:1). Proverbs says, in Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 10: *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe"* (Proverbs 18:10).

Oh, someone today says, "Brother Rogers, I'd like to be a Christian. I'd like to come down to Bellevue Baptist Church and confess my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ in the water of believer's baptism; but, Pastor, I'm just afraid I couldn't live it." Friend, let me tell you something. Christ will be your security. This is not the kind of a religion that you have to hold; it holds you. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, you also receive eternal security. Oh, that's what Bezer tells me—a stronghold, a refuge. *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe"* (Proverbs 18:10).

E. **Ramoth**

And then, what about Ramoth, the next city? Look there, in chapter 20, verse 8: *"and Ramoth in Gilead"* (Joshua 20:8). The name *Ramoth* means, "exalted." It means, "a high place." And, I believe that also speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the Bible says, in Acts chapter 2 and verse 33, that Jesus Christ was *"by the right hand of God exalted"* (Acts 2:33). And, aren't you glad? And, that tells me that not only is Christ my Savior, and my strength, and my satisfaction, and my security; it also tells me He's my sovereign. He's at *"the right hand of God exalted."* He ruleth over all. Oh, what a city of refuge I have, when I come to the Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords!

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F. **Golan**

And, what does *Golan* mean? *Golan*, why it means, "separated"—"separated." And, that tells me that Christ is my sanctification. He's my sanctification; He's the one who separates me from this world. He's the one who's to make me different; He's the one who helps me to fulfill the commands in the scripture that says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"* (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Oh, Jesus is the city of refuge! Aren't you glad that the names—all of them—tell us of Christ our Savior, Christ our strength, Christ our satisfaction, Christ our security, Christ our sovereign, Christ our sanctification?

III. The Nearness of the Cities of Refuge

Now, we talked about the nature of the city—a place of refuge for those who are fleeing from the avenger of blood. We talked about the names of the city that tell us even more about the nature of the Christ that they picture. And now, one last thing I want you to think about is the nearness of the cities—the nearness of the cities. If you will study in chapter 20, verses 7 and 8, you'll find out that God arranged for these cities to be spread out through the land in a definite, geographical pattern. Three of the cities are in the western part, and three of the cities are in the eastern part, of the land of Palestine. One is in the north and the west; one is in the middle and the west; and, one is in the south and the west. One is in the north and the east; one is in the middle and the east; and, one is in the south and the east. Why did God do it? Why this beautiful, geographical pattern? So a city might be near to everyone.

Now, if you're looking for refuge, you want it to be close, amen? And so, these cities were on prominences, they were on mountains where they could be seen; and, there were broad roads leading to these cities. And, those roads were marked, and those roads, according to Levitical law, had to be kept in good repair. Oh, what is God telling us? I'll tell you what He's telling us. *"The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him"* (Psalm 145:18). That's what He's telling us. Oh, the nearness of the city—the nearness of the city—that our Savior is only a prayer away, hallelujah!

I want to show you something very wonderful, if you will look for just a moment in the New Testament. Turn to Romans chapter 10 for just a moment—Romans chapter 10, beginning in verse 6. Don't you love the Bible? I tell you, it's a wonderful book, and it's so wonderful to see the great truths that God has given for us here in this dear book.

Now here, the Lord is speaking to some who need to be saved, in Romans chapter 10, beginning in verse 6: *"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise…"*—would you like to be righteous by faith? Not righteousness by the law, not righteousness by church membership, not righteousness by good deeds, not

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righteousness by baptism—*"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,"*—do you want to be know how to be saved by faith this morning? Listen to it—*"Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)"*—did you know today, if you want to be saved, you don't have to go take a rocket ship and go to Heaven, and say, "Jesus, oh Jesus, please come down out of Heaven and save us." You don't have to do that. Oh, let's go on and read verse 7—*"or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)"* Oh, you don't have to go into the subterranean caverns of the earth; you don't have to go seeking through the graveyards, and down through the catacombs. You don't have to go into the caverns of Hell and say, "Jesus, oh Jesus, if you're here, please come back to the earth and save us." You don't have to do that. Oh, look in verse 8: *"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee,"*—that means "near you"—*"even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach"* (Romans 10:6–8).

Do you want me to tell you how close it is to you? Ladies and gentlemen, it's in your mouth; it's in your heart. You say, "How did it get there? I preached it there just a few minutes ago. That's right, I preached it right into your heart. It is the word of faith that we preach—the word of faith that we preach. I am preaching it now, and it's in your mouth. And, all you have to do is just start talking, and say, "Jesus is Lord." It's in your heart. You don't have to go off to Heaven to find Him. You don't have to go down to Hell to find Him. I want to tell you, He is here, praise His Holy name. *"The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him"* (Psalm 145:18). That's a glorious truth.

Oh, we think of the nature of these cities: they are cities of refuge. We think of the names of these cities: they speak of a wonderful Savior. And, we think of the nearness of these cities: how wonderful—how wonderful—that anybody, anywhere can call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

Conclusion

Look in chapter 10, verse 13—here's the conclusion: *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13). Did you know, right where you are, sitting in your seat, those of you watching on television this very moment can bow your head and say, "Lord Jesus, save me," and He will? There's a city of refuge for you and it is right near. *"The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him."*

But, I want to tell you one of the saddest things, as I close by the way of illustration, is that some are so close and yet so far away. Turn to 2 Samuel chapter 3, and let me give you an illustration, and we'll be finished—2 Samuel chapter 3, and I want you to read a lament of King David. Second Samuel chapter 3 and verse 32—King David is lamenting his friend Abner. *"And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented*

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over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?" (2 Samuel 3:32)—*"Died Abner as a fool dieth?"*

You say, "Pastor, that doesn't make any sense to me. What is all of that about?" Well, let me tell you, and then it will make sense to you. Who was Abner? Abner was a robust, a wise, and a strong warrior. He was a friend of King David, and a friend of a man named Joab, who was David's commander-in-chief. But, one day, after a certain battle on the plains of Gibeon, Abner was being followed by a young man—Asahel was his name. And, Asahel is trying to run Abner down. Asahel is a young man, very fleet of foot, a young athlete we'd call him.

Abner was a very strong mature man, and he knew that he could he could kill Asahel, if he wanted to. But, he didn't want to. He didn't want to fight Asahel. So, Abner is running from this young man, and Abner says to him, "Leave me alone, go on back, leave me alone." But, Asahel just keeps coming, just keeps coming, just keeps coming, and Abner says, "Get away from me now; leave me alone; I don't want to fight you," knowing that he could harm the young lad, if he wanted to. But, Asahel will not take *no* for an answer, and finally, in desperation, Abner takes his spear, and he jams it backward like that, and it strikes young Asahel under the ribs, goes in one side and comes out the other, and he dies.

Now, Abner didn't really want to kill Asahel, but he did. And, you notice in the Bible—we read in just a moment—that he did kill him, but what happened? At that moment when Abner killed Asahel, Joab, Asahel's brother, made up his mind that he was going to kill Abner. Now, read in 2 Samuel chapter 3 and verse 27—2 Samuel chapter 3 and verse 27: *"And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother"* (2 Samuel 3:27).

Now, what happened was this: Abner is standing right in the gates of Hebron. Have you heard that name *Hebron* before? Remember that Hebron is a city of refuge, and all Abner had to do was be inside and he'd be safe. That's all he had to do, just step inside the gate. He's right there at the gate of the city of Hebron, right at the gate of the city of refuge, and there's a Joab of justice on his trail. Joab has sworn that he'll get revenge. But now, I want you to notice how stupid Abner is. Joab comes to Abner, and he has a little smile on his face, and he says to Abner, "Abner, would you step over here for just a moment? There's something I want to speak to you about." And, Abner—we can't believe our eyes—there he goes, walking right toward Joab—there he goes. "Abner, don't do it! Joab is deceiving you!" But, there he goes. And then, he gets close enough. Notice what happens. The Bible says he *"smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother."*

This is the reason that, in verse 33, King David lamented, and he said, "Abner died like

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a fool—like a fool." He didn't have to die. Of all of the places to die, he died right at the gate of the city of refuge. Can you imagine? Can you imagine what a fool he was? And, he was such a wise man. He wasn't really a fool; he was just a fool about one thing.

I want you to go on and notice just how wise this man was. Look in verse 39 of this same chapter. *"And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"* (2 Samuel 3:38)—*"a prince and a great man."* Abner was a great man. But, he was so foolish; he was so stupid; he was deceived. And, he has many a brother sitting right here in my congregation this morning. Many of those who are watching by television are brothers of Abner.

I want to talk to some of you men for a moment—some of you medical men, and some of you lawyers, and some of you engineers, and some of you professors, and some of you builders, and some of you accountants. You're so smart; you're so wise, you're a prince; you're a great man. You know how to do so many things; you are so wise; but yet, you have still stayed right outside the city of refuge. And, when you die, you're going to die like a fool—like a fool. And, what difference would it make then all that you knew? All the people will do is just stand, and weep, and say, "You died like a fool." Oh, I know they won't say that at your funeral. At your funeral, they'll say, "Here lies interred a successful man of great enterprise and influence, and he departs mourned by the whole neighborhood. May his soul rest in peace." But, God's epitaph of your tombstone will be "Fool."

Abner, as a fool, died. And then, David said, "Don't you know that a prince and a great man is fallen?" So wise, so great, so strong, and so foolish, because he died outside the city of refuge, and he died right at the gates—right at the gates—deceived.

Billy Sunday told about Governor Pollock who was governor of Pennsylvania. And, he said that, in his reign as governor, there was a young man who was sentenced to be hanged by the neck for the crime of murder. And, some of his friends had asked the governor to commute the sentence and to somehow let the man at least serve his lifetime out in prison, but not be hanged—to give him life imprisonment. But, the governor, who was a Christian man, still felt that he must abide by the laws of the state, and he said, "No, I cannot do this. The sentence is just and right, and he must be hanged."

Well, this boy's mother tried to get into see the governor, but the governor would not allow her to come. Finally, one day, this boy's mother went to the governor's office. The governor rose from his desk, but this woman fell flat on her face right on the floor and began to crawl on her hands and knees across that floor. And, she got the governor around his legs, and she began to weep, and to cry, and to beg for the life of her son. And, she said, "Governor, please—please let my son live." And, the governor said, "Madam, I will go talk with your son."

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The governor was a Christian. And, the governor went into that penitentiary there, and the guard opened the door, and the governor went into the cell, and sat down with that young man, and began to talk with him. And, the young man was sitting over there in the corner of the cell, and he had his face in his hands, and he wouldn't look up. The governor wanted to talk him, first of all, about his soul, and he said, "Young man, do you read the Bible?" The boy didn't answer. "Young man, do you know about Jesus?" The boy didn't answer. "Young man, did you know that your mother loves you and is praying for you?" The boy sat there.

The governor could not penetrate, walked out, he asked the guard to unlock the door. The guard did, closed the door, locked it again, and said, "Thank you for coming, Governor." And, when he said that, the young man looked like he'd been shot. He said, "Governor? Did you say, 'Governor'?" And, the guard said, "Yes, that was Governor Pollock." He said, "You mean, the man in my cell was the governor, the only man on Earth who could pardon me, the only man on Earth who could let me live. You mean, the governor was in here?" He said, "Yes. Didn't you know he was the governor?" He said, "No, I didn't know he was the governor." He said, "I didn't even talk to him. You mean, the governor was here? Oh," he said, "if I had only known he was the governor—if I had only known he was the governor." And, the hangman said—as they put that black cap over his face and fastened the noose around his neck—he was still saying, "If I had only known he was nigh in my cell, and I wouldn't even talk to him."

Friend, I'm speaking to some of you who evidently don't know that God is talking to you. Some of you who don't know that the Lord Himself is sitting down wanting to reason with you, the Lord Himself in mercy is saying to you, *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18). Some of you do not know how near God is to you right now.

Suppose, Sir, you were to see a house on fire, and in that house you were to see a mother who had a baby in a crib, and the flames are creeping closer and closer to that crib, and you see that mother down on her hands picking up bobby pins, and hairpins, and straight pins, putting them in a little box, and you see her as she begins to take the curtains down off the wall, and the house is being engulfed in flames. You'd say, "She's mad," because the most precious thing there is the baby.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). You're so interested in your business, aren't you? You're so interested in your sports, aren't you? You're so interested in so many things that don't really matter. What should it profit a man if he gained the whole world? Abner died like a fool. He was a wise man, a great man, a prince, but he died just outside—just outside the city of refuge. Let us pray.

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Jesus, The Sinner's Refuge

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 18, 2004 **Time: 0930**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 20:1–3, 7–8

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses."
JOSHUA 20:2

Outline

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Introduction

Take God's Word and find, if you will, Joshua chapter 20. We're going to be in the Old Testament, but we're going to be talking about Jesus, our Lord and Savior. One of the things I've learned about the Bible is all of the Bible is about Jesus. Sometimes people say, "Have you read the four gospels?" Friend, I've read all 66 of the gospels. They're all about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus—Jesus—is the hero of the Bible. Salvation is the theme of the Bible. And, because Jesus is the hero and salvation is the theme, we find Jesus standing somewhere in the shadows in all of the Old Testament if we study it carefully and look at it, because God wants us to be saved and He wants us to love Jesus. So, He's tucked away illustrations—even in the Old Testament.

Now, the cities of refuge, when Joshua was leading the children of Israel, were remarkable. And, I want us to read today in Joshua chapter 20, verses 1 though 3: *"The*

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LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge"—now, just underscore that—"cities of refuge"—and I'll talk to you about that later—*"whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood"* (Joshua 20:1–3).

Now, let me tell you what the avenger of blood is: if a man back in this day were guilty of manslaughter—negligent, or unaware, of what he had done—there was a person who was a family member who was called the "avenger of blood." And, he had the right—and, in that day, the responsibilities—to track down the killer and to slay him. Well, the Lord realized how this could be abused and misused; and so, what the Lord did was to take six cities and make them cities of refuge. Now, these six cities of refuge are highly symbolic and teach us a wonderful lesson.

I. The Saving Nature of These Cities

First of all, I want you to notice what I'm going to call "the saving nature of these cities"—"the saving nature of these cities." And, you'll find that scripture there again in Joshua chapter 20, verses 1 through 3 (Joshua 20:1–3). There were cities there into which the person who was fleeing from justice could go into that city and there be safe. Now, does that refer to the Lord Jesus Christ? I think it does. As a matter of fact, I think that's what the writer of Hebrews was talking about. And, put in your margin "Hebrews 6:18": it speaks of those *"who have fled for refuge to lay hold [of] the hope set before us."* They have fled for refuge. Doubtless, in my mind, this is a reference to the cities of refuge tucked away there. So, just put down, first of all, "the saving nature of these cities," and, by that, "they represent Christ, our Savior and Lord, who is our place of refuge."

II. The Significant Names of These Cities

Now, the second thing I want you to notice is the significant names of these cities. Now, what are their names? Well, look, if you will, over here in verses 7 and 8: *"And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in Mount Naphtali"*—underscore "Kedesh"—*"and Shechem in Mount Ephraim"*—underscore "Shechem"—*"and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron"*—underscore "Hebron"—*"in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer"*—underline "Bezer"—*"in the wilderness upon the plain of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth"*—underscore "Ramoth"—*"in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh"* (Joshua 20:7–8)—Golan. Underscore "Golan." There were six cities—six cities—of refuge. Now, it's an interesting thing, as we study this, to find how these six cities picture the Lord Jesus Christ by their very names.

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A. Kedesh: Christ Our Savior

Look, if you will, in verse 7 again: there is Kedesh (Joshua 20:7). Do you know what *Kedesh* means? *Kedesh* means "holiness." Thank God for our Holy Savior. Kedesh is a place of holiness. And, for you to be saved, to know salvation, to have eternal life, you must come to the sinless, stainless, spotless, Holy Son of God and let Him make you holy.

Now, you can never make yourself holy. Don't try to get better so you can be saved. Get saved so you can be better. Listen, friend, if I've learned one thing it is this—that *holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness.* Thank God for that. Come, bring your sins, bring your weakness, bring your faults, bring your failures—bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't try to clean up without Jesus. Thank God He's a sinless Savior. You can't wash clothes and make them clean washing them in dirty water. And, there's no one else that can save. Mohammad can't save. Confucius can't save. Allah can't save. Only Jesus saves. You believe that? Amen. So, the first city is Kedesh, and it speaks of Christ our Savior.

B. Shechem: Christ Our Strength

Now, the second city is Shechem, and it speaks of Christ our strength. You see, the very name *Shechem* means "shoulder"; it means "support." And, Jesus is our support; Jesus is our strength. He's the One that carries us on His shoulders. You remember over there in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6? The Bible says what? *"The government shall be upon his shoulder"* (Isaiah 9:6). Do you remember there in the parable of the good shepherd, where He goes out and finds that one lost sheep? And, the Bible says, *"He layeth it on his shoulders"* (Luke 15:5) and brings it back to the sheepfold. That's an interesting sheep—a sheep with six legs: four on him on two here. And, he's going back because of Christ our strength.

Now, listen to me, precious friend: don't get the idea that you must live the Christian life. Now, the Christian life ought to be lived, but it is Jesus Christ underneath with His strength carrying you on His shoulders. I've learned that He has done that for me since I was saved as a fourteen-year-old boy. Were it not for the strength of Jesus I never would have made it.

C. Hebron: Christ Our Satisfaction

Now, look at the next name, Hebron, there in verse 7 (Joshua 20:7). And, the word *Hebron* speaks of fellowship, and it really speaks to me of Christ our satisfaction. Hebron is a place that the Bible gives the name "fellowship." That's what the Hebrew name means. And, what does that say to us? Well, friend, not only are we saved by a Holy Savior, not only does He carry us through, but—hallelujah!—He brings us together, that we might have fellowship with one another and fellowship with Him. Put in your

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margin "1 John chapter 1 and verse 3": *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3). So, we come to a Holy Savior, and He's Christ our Savior. We lay our burdens upon Him. He's Christ our strength. And then, we enjoy Him. He is Christ our satisfaction. What your heart yearns for is fellowship with God and fellowship with one another.

Friends all around me are trying to find
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.
—HARRY D. LOES

Thank God that Hebron speaks of Christ our satisfaction. What a fellowship and what a joy divine!

D. Bezer: Christ Our Security

And then, the next city there in verse 8 is Bezer (Joshua 20:8), and that means "stronghold"; it means "fortification." Now, when you come to Jesus, the Holy Savior saves you. And, when He carries you in His arms and when you enter into that sweet fellowship with Him, then you're going to learn the security that Jesus alone can give, because Bezer speaks of fortification; it speaks of a stronghold. And, that means that He's Christ our security. You don't keep Him; He keeps you. If it depended upon my living it, I never would live it.

Friend, let me tell you something: I'm going to ask you today to give your heart to Jesus Christ if you've not done so. And, He is the One that will be your strength and your fortification. The Bible says this in Proverbs 18, verse 10: *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe"* (Proverbs 18:10). Come to Jesus. I promise you—I promise you—on the authority of the Word of God, if you sincerely trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, not only will He save you—He will keep you all the way. That's what the Bible teaches: we have a High Priest who's able to save us to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25). I used to think that meant He could save any kind of sinner. Well, He can, but that's not what it means. It means He'll save you all the way through. He'll keep you—He will keep you. He'll save you instantaneously. He'll be with you continually. He will keep you eternally. Thank God for Bezer, and it speaks of Christ our security.

E. Ramoth: Christ Our Sovereign

And then, Ramoth—*Ramoth* means what? "Exalted." That's what the Bible word means, and it speaks of Christ our sovereign. He is the One high and lifted up. Acts chapter 2 and verse 33: *"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted"*—speaking of Jesus—

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"by the right hand of God [He is] exalted" (Acts 2:33). And again, Philippians 2, verse 9: *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him"* (Philippians 2:9). Oh friend, what a Savior! Hallelujah! High and lifted up! And, the glory is we are seated in the heavenlies with Him. He is exalted. He died for us. He rose for us. He ascended for us, and we are co-enthroned with the Lord Jesus Christ on high. So many Christians have never realized the privilege that they have—being saved by His holiness, carried by His strength, sweet fellowship with Him, secure in Him, and then worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

F. Golan: Christ Our Sanctification

And then, Golan speaks of separation, and it tells me of Christ our sanctification. The word *Golan* means "separate." And, you see, when Jesus saves us, we don't remain the same. *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Now, sanctification is a big, double-jointed word that we don't use very much, but what it literally means is "to be sanctified" or "to be separated." And, literally, *Golan* means "separated unto joy."

Put in your margin now, in the New Testament, "2 Corinthians 6, verses 17 and 18": *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And [I] will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Corinthians 6:17–18). Now, you can't have fellowship with God and you can't truly worship Him if you're dabbling in sin. When I say He will strengthen you, He will—but He'll not strengthen you to sin; He'll strengthen you to live right and righteous.

III. The Strategic Nearness of These Cities

And so, the third thing I want you to think about now… We're talking, now, about the saving nature of these cities. We're talking to you about the very symbolic names of these cities or the significant names. Now, think with me about the strategic nearness of these cities.

Now, you see, God wanted people to have safety and refuge, so He put these six cities out and over the land of Israel. He put them in strategic places—put some in the north, some in the south, some in the east, and some in the west, and one in the center very near to everybody. So, these were spread out. And then, they were—the roads to them were always open and clearly marked. At a crossroads there would be a sign pointing "Miqlat," which means "refuge." So, if you're fleeing, you don't wonder, "Shall I go this way, or shall I go that way?" These roads, as much as possible, were level so there'd be no impediment, no blockades. Stones and trash were removed. And, the roads were wide. They were always open. And, the priests would go out and examine

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these roads to make certain that they were fit. And, these roads were clearly marked and always near. Now, what does that tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ—the strategic nearness of these cities? Listen, folks—your city of refuge is Jesus, and He is always, always, always, always near.

Now, I want you to put in your margin—in the New Testament, now—"Romans 10, verses 6 through 9." Oh, what a great passage this is: *"But the righteousness which is [by] faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it?"*—listen to this—*"The word is nigh thee"*—we're talking about strategic nearness—*"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:6–9).

Now, what's the writer talking about here in the Book of Romans? He's saying, "You want to be saved? You want to be saved?" Listen, he's saying, "You don't have to make a pilgrimage into Heaven, and go up there, and appear before the throne, and say, 'O God, O God, please send us a Savior.'" Why not? Because He's already come. Amen? Now, we don't need to go down into the netherworld and say, "Oh that Jesus could be raised from the dead! We need Him. Bring Him up from the deep." You don't have to do that. He's already come down. He's already been raised from the dead, and He's very near.

Let me tell you how near He is. He said, *"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart"* (Romans 10:8). "Well, how—wait a minute, Pastor—how's the Word of God in my mouth and in my heart? What is this talking about?" Well, well, he's saying that Jesus is in your mouth—I know this sounds a little bizarre, but now listen to me carefully—and He's in your heart. You say, "Well now, wait a minute—how did Jesus get in my mouth and Jesus in my heart? I'm not saved. How did He get there?" I just put it there. "How did you put it there?" *"The word of faith, which we preach"* (Romans 10:8). I'm preaching to you. And, what I'm doing—I'm putting His Word in your mouth and in your heart. Now, you're not saved yet, but he says, "The Word is there." And then, he says, "If you will believe with your heart and confess with your mouth, you'll be saved" (Romans 10:9). It's there. You talk about being close—He is closer to you than the person sitting next to you. He's in your mouth and in your heart.

Now, you must believe in your heart and confess with your mouth. I don't care how close you are. No one is almost saved. *To be almost saved is to be altogether lost.* But, nobody will walk out of this place today saying, "I didn't have an opportunity, and I never heard…" *"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart…the word of faith, which we preach"* (Romans 10:8). That's the strategic nearness of these cities.

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Now folks, I want to speak to you about a man who was so near to salvation and he missed it. Would you turn over here to 2 Samuel this time? And, I want us to continue to think on this theme of the cities of refuge. And, this is chapter 3 of 2 Samuel. Let me just tell you a story. We're talking about how the avenger would come and chase a man, and the man would run into the city of refuge and be safe. Now, there was a man named Abner. And, Abner killed a man named Asahel. He didn't really want to kill him. But, in a battle, Asahel was pursuing him, and he killed Asahel. Now, Asahel's brother was Joab. Joab was the commander-in-chief of King David's armies. But, Joab was also an avenger of blood; and so, he's been looking for a time and a place to slay Abner.

Now, here's the background: Joab and Abner are just outside the city of Hebron, which was one of the six cities of refuge. And, what happened now is Joab says to Abner, "Hey, Ab, come over here. There's something I want to share with you." And, Joab just puts a smile on his face, and in a friendly way he beckons Abner to come to him. It's right there in 2 Samuel 3, verse 27: *"And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly"*—that sounds friendly enough. "Come on, there's something I want to tell you"—*"and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother"* (2 Samuel 3:27). Now, right at the gate of the city—right in the very gates of the city of refuge! But, on the wrong side of the gate, Abner died.

Now, when David heard about the death of Abner, David began to lament. Second Samuel 3, verses 32 through 34: *"And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up"*—this is King David—*"and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented Abner, and said, Did Abner [die] as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him"* (2 Samuel 3:32–34). And then, in 2 Samuel 3, verse 38: *"And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"* (2 Samuel 3:38). David wept. He said, "Oh Abner, that's so foolish. You didn't have to die. You were not in chains. It was your choice." And, he said, "Abner, you died like a fool. Like a sheer fool you died." And then, he told everybody, "He was a great man. He was a prince, and he died!" And friend, where did he die? Right at the gate of the city of refuge, but he was on the wrong side of that gate. He never stepped in.

Now, I read in the New Testament of Judas who kissed Jesus. That's pretty close. He kissed the door of Heaven and went to Hell. There are some people who can be so close. The word is near them—"nigh" them—in their mouth and in their heart (Romans 10:8). They are right at the threshold of salvation. Some of you in this building are that way, but you're on the wrong side.

Now, David said, "A great man—a prince—has fallen" (2 Samuel 3:38). Do you

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know, some men, some of you businessmen, bankers, lawyers, entrepreneurs—some of you very successful ladies—you're going to miss Heaven. You're a great person—I mean, great in the eyes of this world. Hmm, you know, the Bible says, *"[A] rich man…died… And in hell he [lifted] up his eyes, being in torments"* (Luke 16:22–23). Can you imagine his funeral? Can you imagine what it must have been like—this rich man? Well, no, you know, if they had automobiles in that day, out front would be a lot of Mercedes, and Cadillacs, and high-class automobiles. People would be all dressed, and they'd come into the funeral. And, the casket would be there and the body. And, some man would get up get and make a speech over it. And, he says, "Here lies So-and-so, a man of great influence and prestige, and we commit him to the Almighty"—a great man in the eyes of people, but his soul was in Hell before the undertaker heard he was dead. Why? Why? Because people like this are victims of a cunning deception. They don't realize how important it is to deal with their souls. They deal with their bank accounts. They deal with their golf game. They deal with their family. They deal with all of these things, but they don't deal with God. Bill Gates, a multi-multi-multi billionaire, was asked, "Do you go to church?" He said, "No, I don't." "Why?" He said, "It is a waste of time." A great man—his name is known worldwide. Friend, listen—I don't care how great you are. You may be a prince in this city, but if you don't give your heart to Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches you are a fool—you're a fool.

Jesus said to another man, who was wealthy and he was a rich farmer… And, he said, "I've got it all made." And, Jesus said, *"Thou fool, this night [shall] thy soul…be required of thee"* (Luke 12:20). It doesn't matter what else you're doing—if you don't give your heart to Jesus Christ, you're very foolish, because, you see, the Bible says, *"What [should it profit a man], if he [should] gain the whole world, and [yet] lose his soul? or what [should] a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26). I mean, when you compare your soul to other things, what is more valuable—a bank account, a career, your sports, your beautiful yard? What is more important?

Suppose there's a house on fire. And, in that house is a mother and her little baby, and that little baby is in the crib. The mother smells the smoke. She sees the flames. She knows the house is going to be consumed. So, she goes around and gets the pots and pans and carries them out. She goes and takes the pictures off the wall and carries them out. She goes and gets the clothes from the closet and carries that outside. And, the whole time her baby is there in the crib to perish in the flames. You'd say she's insane. Well, listen—you are living for the trinkets of this world. You're a great man—a prince? I want to tell you if you don't care for your soul, Jesus said, *"What [should it profit a man], if he [should] gain the whole world, and lose his [own] soul?"* (Matthew 16:26).

Now, why did Abner do this? Well, Abner was the victim of a cunning deception.

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Joab acted as if he were his friend. He said, “Hey, Ab, come over here. There’s something I want to tell you.” And, he puts one arm around him, and with a dagger he stabs him under the fifth rib. And, he dies right there on the threshold at the steps of Hebron. No wonder David said, “He died like a fool. He didn’t have to die that way.” He should have known about Joab and what Joab wanted him to do. And, David wept—David wept over Abner. You know, it’s time that we weep over lost souls before they die. You see, all the tears of David could not bring Abner back nor rescue him.

In another church, I got a phone call. A lady that I knew well was on the other end. She was hysterical—just hysterical. She was saying, “Oh Pastor, Pastor, Pastor, Pastor!” I said, “Hold it! Tell me what is wrong.” She said, “My daddy is in Hell. My daddy is in Hell. My daddy is in Hell. Pastor, my daddy died, and he’s in Hell.” I said, “Your daddy is not in Hell.” He was a medical doctor. I said, “Your daddy is not in Hell. Your daddy is in Heaven.” She said, “Why do you say that? He wasn’t a Christian.” I said, “Yes, he was. A few days ago, I went by his house and asked him if he knew how to be saved. And, he wasn’t certain, and I told him. And, I asked him if he wanted to receive Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord, and he said he did. And, I led him to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Your daddy is not in Hell. Your daddy is in Heaven. But now, I want to ask you a question: Did you ever witness to your daddy? Did you ever tell him about Jesus? Did you try to save him or get him saved?”

Friend, one of these days it’ll be too late for tears. If you’re going to weep over your loved ones, weep for them now, not before they die. And, shed tears for them. We have friends, neighbors, relatives who are being deceived by the devil, and they are going to die and go to Hell.

Conclusion

Now, what can we learn from all of this? Four things I want to lay on your heart:

A. If You’re Inside the City of Refuge, Hallelujah!

Number one: If you are inside—if you’re already inside—hallelujah, what a Savior! Thank God for Christ our salvation. Thank God for Christ our strength. Thank God for Christ our satisfaction. Thank God! Thank God! Thank God. Oh friend, we are blessed if we’re inside that city. Amen? We’re so blessed.

B. If You’re Not Inside the City of Refuge, Come in Today

Now, number two—listen: If you’re not inside the city of refuge, if you’ve not yet received Jesus Christ, come in today. I would not lay my salvation aside if you were to stack this building with gold and say, “All you have to do is lay your salvation aside for a day.” You say, “You’re lying.” I’m telling you the absolute truth. If you were to stack it with gold from floor to ceiling, wall to wall, and say, “It’s all yours if you will put aside

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Jesus for one day," I wouldn't do that. I'll tell you why. First of all, I might die in that day. The Bible says, *"Boast not thyself of to morrow [for you don't know] what a day may bring forth"* (Proverbs 27:1). Number two: I would miss loving Jesus for that day. And, number three: I would not so disgrace the Lord Jesus to set Him aside for all the gold in the world.

Friend, if you have no yet come into the city of refuge, if you've not yet turned to Jesus and said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart; forgive my sin," do it. I don't care how great you are in this community. You can be a great man and a prince, but you can die like a fool—you can die like a fool.

C. We Need to Tell Our Friends About the City of Refuge

Now, the third thing I want to lay on your heart is we need to warn and educate our friends, and tell them about the city of refuge, and tell them about the deception of the devil. Your children are sitting ducks for the devil. The devil is a liar! The devil is a deceiver! He'll put his arms around you and act like he's your friend, but there's a knife that's coming under the fifth rib. He doesn't want you inside that city.

D. We Need to Weep for the Lost Before They Die

The last thing I want to say is this: we need to weep for the lost before they die. Jeremiah said, *"O, that my…eyes [were] a fountain of tears"* (Jeremiah 9:1). Somebody has described the modern Church as a dry-eyed Church in a Hell-bent world. When is the last time you shed a tear for some soul that was mortgaged to the devil?

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Now, if you're in that city, thank God for it. If you have a neighbor, a friend, a brother that's not in, begin to intercede for that one. And friend, if you've not yet given your heart to Jesus Christ, God brought me here, and God brought you here, and God brought His Word here, and God put His Spirit here, that you might be saved today. And, I want to lead you in a prayer, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you will trust Christ, He will save you instantaneously, He will be with you continually, and He will keep you eternally. Would you pray this kind of a prayer? "Dear God, I need to be saved. I need a city of refuge. I know that judgment is on the trail and Satan seeks to slay me. Lord, I need a refuge. And, Lord Jesus, I come to You today—I come to You as a little child. I lay my intellectual pride in the dust, and Lord, I come as a little child to You. I trust You to save me. Lord, forgive my sins because Jesus died and paid for my sins with His blood. Come into my heart, for Lord, You promised to do so. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public, even today. In Your name I pray. Amen."

"Now, Pastor Rogers, why did you pray, 'Lord, give me the courage to make it public'?" You know, the Bible says, "If thou shalt believe in thine heart and confess with

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thy mouth, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). We already talked about it: the Word is in your heart and in your mouth (Romans 10:8). You believe with your heart and then you confess with your mouth. Now, walking down a church aisle doesn't save anybody. Shaking a preacher's hand doesn't save anybody. But, *the faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to Heaven.* Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of Me before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). So, are you willing today, if you prayed that prayer, to show God and to testify before this church that you are sincere?

When we stand and sing in a moment, I'm going to invite you to leave your seat and come forward. There will be a minister friend at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to welcome you as you come. Now, those of you who are up in the balcony, there will be a friend under that banner in the corner over there that says, "Redeemer," and over here on this corner that says, "Messiah." You just move that direction. And, you say, "Pastor, what would I say when I go there?" Well, if you're giving your heart to Jesus, just say, "I'm trusting Jesus." "Well, what will happen?" Well, very courteously and very quietly, in a quiet place, we will take the Word of God and one more time re-emphasize what it means to be saved and have a prayer of commitment with you. We can answer questions because we have an open Bible. And, we'll do that this morning.

Now, there are others of you who have been saved and you know it, but you've never had believer's baptism, like those you saw baptized. Now, baptism doesn't save you, but friend, it shows obedience. And, obedience is necessary to growth in the Christian life. What a testimony, when a person is baptized, to his friends, and neighbors, and family! So, if you've never had believer's baptism, I want you to come and say, "Look, I know I'm saved"—if you do—"and I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I want to be baptized as a follower of Jesus Christ." And, we'll make an appointment for your baptism.

Thirdly, there are those who have been saved and properly baptized, but your church membership is elsewhere, and you need a church home. Listen, my precious friend—every Christian ought to be a member of a local New Testament church—if not this one, one somewhere. If this is where God speaks to your heart and where you worship, most likely this is where you need to belong.

And so, when we sing, some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Christ." Others, hopefully, are coming, saying, "I want believer's baptism." Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here." Let's stand together with our heads bowed, and I want to pray one more time; and then, the choir's going to sing. And, wherever you are, I'm going to ask you to boldly step out for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, I pray now—I pray, I pray—in the name of Jesus that You will draw men,

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women, boys, and girls to salvation today. And Lord, give us in fellowship those who ought to be members here. And, help people, Christians, who've never be obedient about baptism to get it settled today. In Jesus's name. Amen. The choir's going to sing. Right now, you step out and come—right this moment.

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Jesus, The Sinner's Refuge

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 18, 2004 **Time: 1100**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 20:1–3, 7–8

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses."
JOSHUA 20:2

Outline

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Introduction

Well, if your boat has torn sails and if your boat is battered and worn, there is an anchor. His name is Jesus, and I hope that you know Him. If you've never received Him as your personal Lord and Savior, acknowledged Him openly and publicly, I'm praying and hoping that this will be the day that you will do that.

Now, would you take the Bible—the Word of God—and open to the Book of Joshua—the Book of Joshua? And, when you've found it, turn, if you will, to chapter 20—Joshua chapter 20. And, when you've found it, look up here, and let me tell you something: many of us today have failed to appreciate the Old Testament because we think that the Old Testament is about Israel and the New Testament is about Jesus. All of the Bible is about Jesus.

Now, listen to me: in the Old Testament, the Bible says someone is coming; in the

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gospels, someone has come; and, in the Book of the Revelation, someone is coming again. Jesus is the hero of the Bible. If you read the Bible and you don't find Jesus somewhere, you need to re-read it. He is the hero of the Bible. And, the Bible has Jesus as a hero, salvation as a theme, Satan as the villain. So, in this Old Testament story, we're going to find a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, and my prayer is that it will bless you and cause you to love Him better than you ever have—and if you have not yet received Him, that today you will receive Him as your personal Lord and Savior.

Now, let's read here in Joshua chapter 20, verses 1 through 3: *"The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood"* (Joshua 20:1–3). Now, what on earth is this talking about? Well, in Bible times, they did not have the court system that we have today. And, if a man were guilty of intentional manslaughter, or he was careless, or even somehow felt that what he did in killing another was justified in self-defense, there was something called the "avenger of blood." The nearest relative was to avenge the blood of the person who had been slain, and he was called the "avenger of blood." But, God, knowing that sometimes people are unfairly judged, that somehow they'd need a place of refuge—a city to go to where they might be safe—God appointed some cities of refuge. Now, we're going to say more about that in a moment, but just remember this—that Jesus Christ—point number one—Jesus Christ is our city of refuge.

I. The Saving Nature of These Cities

Notice the saving nature of these cities. When we come to Jesus, Jesus is our refuge. He's our safety, and we can flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for that refuge. Now, the writer of Hebrews said this in the New Testament: put it in your margin—Hebrews chapter 6, verse 18: it speaks of those *"who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"* (Hebrews 6:18). Now, I have little doubt but what the writer of Hebrews is talking about the passage we have before us. He's talking about those who came to Jesus and fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus. The Bible says that *"the name of the LORD is a [high] tower: the righteous runneth into it, and [are] safe"* (Proverbs 18:10). Now, the thing that I want to lay upon your heart is the saving nature of these cities.

II. The Significant Names of These Cities

Now, we want to tighten the focus a little bit, and I want you to think of the significant names of these cities. Look, if you will now, in verses 7 and 8: *"And they appointed Kedesh"*—underscore that—*"in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem"*—underscore that—*"in mount Ephraim"*—underscore "Shechem"—*"and Kirjatharba, which is*

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Hebron"—underscore "Hebron"—*"in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side of Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer"*—underscore "Bezer"—*"in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth"*—underscore "Ramoth"—*"in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan"*—underscore "Golan"—*"in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh"* (Joshua 20:7–8).

And so, here are six cities. Now, I want you to notice not only the security in these cities, but I want you to notice the significant names of these cities, because I believe, by the providence of God and divine inspiration, they represent the character of the Lord Jesus Christ and what He does for us.

A. Kedesh: Christ Our Savior

Now, think, for example, about Kedesh. What is the Hebrew meaning of *Kedesh*? It means "holiness"—"holiness." Now friend, you will not be saved apart from a holy Savior. Jesus was the stainless, spotless, sinless Son of God. And, because He is holy, He is the only One who can save us. You see, Confucius can't save you. Buddha can't save you. Mohammad cannot save you. These are all sinners. There was only one sinless Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is holy. And, the Bible says this in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14—put it in your margin: *"[And] follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"* (Hebrews 12:14). It is God that makes us holy through the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, I said these other people cannot save because they're sinners. You wash clothes in dirty water, and they'll still be dirty. What can wash away my sin? Only the holiness of our Lord and Savior.

B. Shechem: Christ Our Strength

Now, the next city—look at it—Shechem. What does *Shechem* mean? It means "shoulder"; it means "support." And, that represents, again, the Lord Jesus Christ—not only the Lord as Savior, but the Lord as strength. He is our strength. When you carry something on your shoulders, you are being carried along by another's strength. The Bible says in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: *"and the government shall be upon his shoulder"* (Isaiah 9:6). The Bible tells us of a Jesus who went out after that one lost sheep, and He laid it on His shoulders and brought it back to the sheepfold (Luke 15:5). Jesus is our Savior, and Jesus is our strength.

Now, some of you say, "Well, you know, if I were to give my heart to Jesus Christ, then—I know my own weakness—I wouldn't be able to live the Christian life." Friend, that's exactly true. You're not able, but the Lord will put you on His shoulders and carry you through. And, that little weak lamb—that little lost sheep—is on the shoulder of the mightiest Shepherd who brings it back to the fold. Had it not been that God not only saves me, but gives me strength, I would never have made it, nor will you. But, I promise you, friend—listen to me—I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if

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you'll let Jesus be your Savior, He will also be your strength.

C. Hebron: Christ Our Satisfaction

And then, look, if you will, at the next city in verse 7—Hebron (Joshua 20:7). *Hebron* means "fellowship," and it speaks of Christ our satisfaction. Do you know what your heart longs for? Do you know what you yearn for? Oh, there's a need in your heart and in your life for fellowship with God. Nothing else will satisfy you. Until you have fellowship with God, you're going to be a round peg in a square hole, you're going to be a fish out of water, you're going to be like a bird under water. God made the fish to swim in the sea. God made the birds to fly in the air. God made you to know Him, and worship Him, and fellowship with Him. And, until you do, you will never—no, never; no, never—understand what you are meant to be.

Look, if you will, in—and put this in your margin—1 John chapter 1 and verse 3: *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you"*—that's what the apostle says—*"that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3). That's what we're doing here in church: we're having fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, with the Father, and with His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. One of these cities is Hebron, which speaks of fellowship. What a fellowship and what a joy divine!

D. Bezer: Christ Our Security

Now, the next city right there in verse 8 is Bezer (Joshua 20:8). And, *Bezer* means "stronghold," and it speaks of Christ our security. We find security in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does He save us by His holy death for us on the cross, not only is He is our strength and carries us on our shoulders, not only does He fill us with *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8) as we worship Him and, for the first time, are in tune with the Almighty, but friend, I'll tell you what else He does: He gives us security. "Christ our security"—that's what the name *Bezer* means. It means "fortification." I gave you that scripture before: *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and are safe"* (Proverbs 18:10). Do you think if you gave your heart to Jesus Christ today that He would ever let you go? He will not. He cannot. He must not. When you run into the city of refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ—He is your fortification, He is your stronghold. And, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that the Christ who gives us salvation will give us security. Isn't that good? It's wonderful news.

E. Ramoth: Christ Our Sovereign

Now, look, if you will, at the next city, Ramoth. What does *Ramoth* mean? Well, it means "exalted," and this speaks of Christ our sovereign. He is the exalted Son of God. Acts chapter 2, verse 33 (speaking of Jesus): *"Therefore being by the right hand of God*

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exalted"—"exalted" (Acts 2:33). And then, Philippians 2, verse 9: *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name"* (Philippians 2:9). This Savior who is holy, who saves us; this Savior who is strong who carries us; this Savior who wants to fellowship with us and cause us to fellowship with one another—this wonderful Savior is the One who is going to keep us and give us security. And, because of that, we worship Him. What a mighty God we serve! Because of that, we lift our hearts in reverence and praise to the exalted Son of God with a name above every name.

F. Golan: Christ Our Sanctification

And then, the last of these six cities is Golan. What does *Golan* mean? You'll find that in verse 8 (Joshua 20:8). It means "separated," and that speaks of Christ our sanctification. You see, not only did Jesus save us *from* something—He saved us *to* something. And, we're separated from the world. Are you separated from the world? If you're not, it's because you haven't trusted the Lord. You can't say that you're a Christian and continue to live in this world. You know, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 17 and 18: *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Corinthians 6:17–18).

Now, you cannot hold onto God with one hand and onto the world with another hand. This Jesus—this Jesus who is your Savior; this Jesus who is your strength; this Jesus who is your satisfaction; this Jesus who is your security; this Jesus who is your sovereign—is the Jesus of your sanctification. Now, He will make you—He will make you—different when you allow Him to do so. And, a Christian in this sinful world is going to stand out like a diamond in a coalmine. You're going to be different. You say, "Well, I just… I don't have what it takes." That's the point. Of course you don't have what it takes. Jesus in you—Jesus in you—is the One who will make you what you ought to be. And, those who already know the Lord Jesus will have to say "amen" and "amen" for that. All of these special names of these cities speak of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Strategic Nearness of These Cities

Now, here's the third thing I want you to notice today: I want you to notice the strategic nearness of these cities. God wanted any body who needed help to have a city nigh at hand—very, very near. And so, what God did—God made the roads very wide so there'd be plenty of room. And then, God removed all of the obstructions on that road. He had the priests to do that. Any fallen limb, any tree, was to be removed and all the stones taken out. And then, what God did was to build bridges—had them to build

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bridges over any stream. And then, what the Lord did at the crossroads going to these cities—He would have a sign pointing. If you come to the crossroad and not know which way to go, there would be a sign posted: "Miqlat," which means "refuge." So, here's a man running. Here's a wide road. There are no obstructions. And, at best, the road is leveled, and it's very wide. And, when he gets to the crossroads, the thing says, "Go this way!" And, not only that, but the road was open always. No one should shut the road. And, the priests would go out and examine—the elders and the priests would go out and examine the road to make sure that the roads to the cities of refuge were always open.

Now, what am I saying? I'm talking about the strategic nearness of these cities. Anybody who needed to flee to the city of refuge could easily do so. And, a wayfaring man, though a fool, *"should not err therein"* (Isaiah 35:8). If he needed to get to the city of refuge, God had arranged it that he could and would get to the city of refuge. Now, what does that speak about? Well, I talked about the strategic nearness of these cities. That speaks to me of Jesus who is very, very near to you today.

Now, if you're not a saved person, I want to tell you how close Jesus Christ is to you: He's closer than the person sitting next to you. He's closer than the clothes on your body. I'll tell you how close He is—and this is going to sound foolish at first: but He is in your heart and in your mouth. You say, "Well, I'm not a Christian. How could He be in my heart?" Well, He's there. "What do you mean He's in my mouth?" Well, let me give you a scripture. Write it down—Romans 10, verses 6 through 9: *"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it?"*—now listen, we're talking about the nearness of these cities—*"what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:6–9).

Let me try and explain that passage to you, because it's a key passage in the Word of God. Paul says, "Look, you want to be saved? You don't have to make a pilgrimage to Heaven and say, 'O God, send us a Savior from above to bring Christ the Messiah down from above.'" He said, "He's already come. You don't have to do that. You don't have to go into the Netherlands or the grave and say, 'O God, raise up Your crucified Son, that He might come and save us.' He is already been raised. He is already present. He came from above. He died. He is raised from the dead." Now, listen to what he says: *"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth…the word of faith, which we preach"—"and in [thine] heart"* (Romans 10:8). "Well, how did it get in my mouth?" I put it there. "How did it get in my heart?" I put it there. You say, "I don't understand that."

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"The word of faith, which we preach"—what I'm doing right now, right now—*"the word of faith, which we preach"* (Romans 10:8)—is putting Jesus Christ in your heart and in your mouth. That doesn't mean you're saved, but it means Jesus is very near to you, even so near that He's in your heart and in your mouth.

Now, here's what the writer says: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth…and…believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:9). All you have to do is believe what's already in your heart. It's there. All you have to do is confess with your mouth that which is already there, because He is there. Believe Him enough to confess Him as your personal Lord and Savior, for what's in the heart, the mouth is willing to tell. And, God says you will be saved—you will come into that city of refuge.

Now, the sad thing is that there are those who miss the Lord Jesus Christ. There are those in that day and in this day who do not come to the city of refuge. I want you to take your Bibles this time and fast-forward, if you will, to 2 Samuel. And, look with me, if you will, in verse 3—or chapter 3. And, before we read this, let me give you the background.

Now, remember the avenger of blood was a near relative who would chase and cut down the person who committed the dastardly deed of killing a relative. So, this person, though perhaps unwittingly had done that—he's still guilty in that sense, and so he flees for his life to the city of refuge. But, here's what happened: there was a man named Abner who killed a man named Asahel. They were in a battle, but Abner killed Asahel. Well, Asahel's brother was Joab. And, Joab was David's commander-in-chief of his army. And so, upon a time, Abner and Joab were just outside one of the cities of refuge, which was Hebron. And, there Joab said to Abner, "Come over here." He smiled at him as if he would tell him a secret. He said, "Come over here. I have something I want to tell you, Abner." And, like a lamb to the slaughter, Abner went over to Joab. Joab put his arm around Abner and then took a dagger and put it under his fifth rib, and he died. He was killed by the avenger of blood. Let me give you the scripture here—2 Samuel chapter 3, verse 27: *"And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and [he] smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother"* (2 Samuel 3:27). Now, where did he die? He died at the very gate of the city of refuge. Can you imagine that? But, he was on the wrong side of the gate.

Now, David, when David heard that Abner died and that Joab had killed Abner, David was heartbroken. Look, if you will, in 2 Samuel 3, verses 32 and 34: *"And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?"*—that is, "Abner, you died like a fool. You didn't have to die." Look in the

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next part of this verse—*"Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him"* (2 Samuel 3:32–34).

Now, look down, if you will, in 2 Samuel 3, verse 38: *"And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"* (2 Samuel 3:38). Now, what's all of this about? Here was a man right outside the gate of the city of refuge, and he is put to death. And, David is weeping for his friend. He said, "You didn't have to die that way. You were not chained and handcuffed. Nobody dragged you there before Joab. You were so foolish to listen to this one." And, he wept over his friend, Abner. And then, he said to all the people, "Don't you know that this man who died was a prince and a great man in Israel?" This was not an ordinary man; this was a great man, and he was gifted in many things. But, he made a tragic mistake that he did not go into the city of refuge. He's like so many people in the world today. I mean, these are great scientists, great politicians, wealthy entrepreneurs, men of medicine, men of law, men of entrepreneurial success—but they don't get right with God, and they die like a fool. Now, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but if you have not prepared for death, if you've not given your heart to Jesus Christ, if you have never come into the city of refuge, when you die, you'll die as a fool.

Jesus talked about a man of great success, and He was talking about many years, and God said, *"Thou fool, this night [shall] thy soul…be required of thee"* (Luke 12:20). Not a mother's child in this building knows for certain that you'll see the sunset today. You don't know. "What is your life but a vapor that appeareth for a little while and vanishes away?" (James 4:14). You think all of your knowledge, and all of your success, and your automobiles, and your business, and your house, and your lawn, and your clothes—do you think that's all that important? Not as important as preparing for eternity.

What if a house were on fire and the mother in that house has her baby in the crib? And so, she's going to take her belongings out of that house. She goes in the kitchen and gets her dishes, and her pots, and pans, and sets them outside. Then, she goes and takes her precious pictures from the wall and her scrapbooks and puts them outside. And then, she goes into the closet and begins to get bundles of clothes and carry them outside. The whole time the house is burning and the baby is sleeping there in the crib. And, the baby perishes. You'd say, "She must be insane. She must be a fool." I agree. You know, we're so busy collecting our things, trying to gather our things, and Jesus said, *"What [should] it profit a man, if he [should] gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what [should] a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mark 8:36–37).

Now, David said that Abner was a great man and a prince, but he died like a fool.

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You know, there are a lot of great men in this world, and some of them are in this auditorium. And, the most foolish thing that you can do is to fail to prepare for eternity. I read the other day that somebody asked Bill Gates, a multi-billionaire, one of the richest men in the world (if not the richest), "Do you go to church?" He said, "No." "Why not?" He said, "It is a waste of time"—"a waste of time." Here's a man—that all of his riches will not get him into the city of refuge. And, you can be a great man and die and go to Hell. You can be a noble woman and die and go to Hell if you die on the wrong side of the gate of refuge.

Here's Abner right at the very gate. What about Judas who betrayed Jesus? The Bible says that Judas kissed Jesus when he betrayed Him. Now, you think about that. Jesus said, *"I am the door: by me [you shall] enter in"* (John 10:9). Here was a man, Judas, who kissed the door of Heaven and went to Hell. You can be in a church like this. You can hear preaching like this. You can say "amen" like this. You can do all of these things, but unless you give your heart to Jesus Christ—I'm talking about in a personal way—unless you come into Him, you're going to be a man, a woman, deceived. If you go to Hell, it's not because chains are on you—not because you've been dragged into Hell. It is because of your own sinful neglect. You cannot say, "I never heard the message."

Well, why would a great man and a prince do such a foolish thing? Why would he die as a fool? I'll tell you why: he was a victim of a cunning deception. Joab deceived him. Joab said to him, "Come over here, Abner. I want to talk with you." He put his arm around him and pretended he was his friend, when he was really his enemy. And, he had one thing in his mind, and that was to kill Abner. Now, many people—some in this auditorium—are being deceived. Satan is showing you the good life. You think that Satan is your friend. But, all Satan wants to do is to bring you to death, and he never wants you to get into the city of refuge.

Here was Abner deceived. Can you see Joab with a smile on his face, saying, "Hey, Ab, come over here, buddy. There's something I want to tell you," and then slips in the knife? Satan is that way. He is a liar. He is a deceiver. No wonder that David wept. Look, if you will, in 2 Samuel chapter 3, verses 32 and 34 again: *"And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept"* (2 Samuel 3:32). Now, they wept over this man, but their weeping was too late. They needed to weep before he died. They needed to pray before he died, and they needed to guard Abner before he died. Some of you have loved ones who are going to die and, listen to me, and are going to go to Hell. And oh, how you will weep, but no tears can bring them back. No tears could bring Abner back.

In another church, I had a woman who called me on the phone and she was hysterical. She said, "Oh Pastor, Pastor, Pastor, Pastor, Pastor." I said, "Hold it! Get a

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hold of yourself. You're acting hysterical. What is wrong?" She said, "Pastor, my daddy is in Hell—my daddy is in Hell." Her daddy was a medical doctor, and her daddy died somewhat suddenly. And, she said, "My daddy is in Hell. He died without Christ." I said, "Your daddy is not in Hell." She said, "Why do you say that?" I said, "A few days ago I went by to visit him. I asked him if he were a Christian. He said 'no.' I asked him if he understood how to be saved. He said, 'No, I don't.' I explained the gospel to him and asked him if he wanted to be saved. He said, 'Yes, I do.' And, we prayed, and he received Jesus Christ as his personal Savior." Now, I asked this lady this question because I thought it was time for a rebuke after the good news. I said, "Your daddy is not in Hell. Your daddy is in Heaven. But, I want to ask you this question: Did you ever witness to your daddy? Did you ever tell your daddy how to be saved? Did you ever plead for his soul, that he might give his heart to Jesus?" She said, "No." I said, "Lady, if it had been up to you, your daddy would be in Hell." You see, you can weep, but you weep too late. They wept over Abner, but it was too late to weep over him.

Jesus—Jesus—is our city of refuge. I want you to understand that today, and I want you to give your heart to Jesus.

Conclusion

Now, what truths can we learn from Jesus, our city of refuge—Jesus, who is such a wonderful Savior, the holy One, the strong One, the fortification and the sanctification—all of these things? What can we learn from all of this?

A. If You're in the City of Refuge, You Need to Love Jesus

Well, first of all, precious friend, if you're already in the city of refuge, you need to love Jesus. You need to praise Him for your salvation, for your redemption. Give Him the glory. Never lose the excitement of being a child of God. I was sitting there this morning listening to the music, and I was saying, "Lord Jesus, You are so wonderful—so wonderful." To praise Him—if you know that you're saved, rejoice in your salvation. You have something absolutely, gloriously wonderful.

B. If You're Outside the City of Refuge, Come In

Now, second thing—if you have never given your heart to Jesus Christ, if you're still on the outside rather than on the inside, come in today—come in today. I would not go without Jesus 24 hours, no matter what you offer me. If you could stack this building from floor to ceiling and wall to wall with gold and say, "All you have to do to get all that gold is to do without 24 hours," I wouldn't do that. Why? Well, number one, I might die in that 24 hours. Number two: I love Jesus more than I love gold, and I would not betray the Lord Jesus for a ton of gold or anything else. And, I want, listen—you say, "Are you telling the truth?" Oh, as surely as I'm standing here, I'm telling you the truth. I would not

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betray my Lord 24 hours for all the wealth of this world. But, many of you are not going one day; you're going two days, three days, four days, weeks, months, years, putting it off, when the Bible says, *"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"* (Proverbs 27:1). The wisest thing—the safest thing—that you can ever do is to come into the city of refuge—listen to me—today, today. The Bible says, *"[Behold, now is the day of salvation.] To day if [you'll] hear his voice, harden not your hearts"* (Hebrews 4:7).

C. We Need to Weep over the Lost

The next thing I want to say is this: Church, we need to learn to weep over the lost—to weep over the lost. You know, sometimes we have sort of a casual, take-it-or-leave-it attitude. Never lose your burden for lost souls. Never, ever, ever, ever fail to be concerned for the lost. Weep over the lost. *"[They] that [go] forth [with tears], bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing [their sheaves] with [them]"* (Psalm 126:6). When's the last time you ever shed a tear for some soul that is mortgaged to the devil? If you don't have a compassion for lost souls, I suggest that you get alone and wait before God until He gives you a passion and you see a world as He saw them. The Bible says when Jesus saw those people in His day, that He was moved with compassion. The word *compassion* means "the deepest feelings." Jeremiah said, *"Oh that…[my] eyes [were] a fountain of tears, that I might weep…[over] the slain of the daughter of [Jerusalem]"* (Jeremiah 9:1).

D. We Need to Warn Those Around Us About the Devil

Next, those of you have friends and you have associates—you need to inform them of the deceiver, who is the devil. He is a liar—he is a liar. He wants to deceive your children. He wants to deceive your neighbors. And, he's doing a good job at it. And, you need to warn them that Satan, like Joab, is a deceiver. He is not a friend. He is an enemy. He doesn't want you to be saved. He wants you to go to Hell because he wants you to die in your sins.

Now, bow your heads in prayer. Every head bowed. Those of you who already know the Lord Jesus, I want you to begin to pray silently for those around you, whether… You don't know their relationship. They may be a member of this church for a long time and may not be saved. Church members ought to be saved, but many are not. Pray for the person to your right, the person to your left—I mean, sincerely pray for them. Pray for the person in front of you and behind you. Pray. Most likely, everybody's being prayed for right now. Precious friend, somebody is praying for you.

Now, those of you who are not absolutely certain that you're saved, let me tell you something: Jesus Christ is so close to you this morning. He's already in your mouth and in your heart. What you need to do is confess with your mouth and believe in your heart

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that God hath raised Him from the dead and you will be saved. Jesus is so close to you right now. You are right at the gate of the city of refuge, and I want to invite you to come in. And, I want to lead you in a prayer. Now, forget anybody else is here. And, I want you to pray sincerely this prayer if you want to be saved. Now, religion can't save you. Church membership can't save you. Good behavior can't save you. Baptism can't save you. Only Jesus can save. Pray a prayer like this: "O God, I'm lost, and I need to be saved. Jesus, thank You that You're the holy Son of God that shed Your blood on the cross, that my sin debt would be paid. I believe that. I confess it with my mouth. I believe in my heart that God has raised You from the dead. I trust You now to save me. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage today to make it public. Help me not only to believe in my heart, but to confess with my mouth. In Your name, dear Savior. Amen."

Now, look up here If you prayed that prayer and you meant it. I'm going to ask you to do something wonderful and glorious. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. It will be your way of acknowledging Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. Walking a church aisle can't save you. Shaking hands with the preacher can't save you. That's not the point. You're saying, "I believe in my heart enough to confess with my mouth." Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). "But, if you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father in Heaven" (Matthew 10:32).

So, here's what we've arranged to do: we've arranged for the ministers of our church to stand at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to welcome and receive you who'll be coming forward. And, if you're in the balcony, there'll be a friend standing under that banner to my right that says, "Redeemer," and that one to my left that says, "Messiah" for those of you in the balcony. Those on this side, you'll just move this way; those on that side, move that way. And, the rest of you who'll be coming, you just come forward and there'll be someone waiting to receive you.

"Well, Pastor, I've never done that. I don't know what to say when I go down there." Well, if you prayed that prayer with me, here's what I want you to say: "I'm trusting Jesus." Now, you can say that. "Well, Pastor, what will happen?" Well, number one: we'll rejoice. Number two: we'll go to a quieter place for a few moments with you and very courteously and quietly share some scripture with you to help you know for certain that you're saved and seal it in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. It'll be one of the greatest things you've ever done.

Now, others of you this morning have been saved, but you've never been properly baptized, like those we've seen baptized this morning. And, you know that you need believer's baptism. Maybe you were immersed before you were saved, and that doesn't count. It's like having your funeral before you die. Or, maybe—maybe—you were not

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baptized by immersion, as the Bible teaches. And now, God has taught you this, and you want to be baptized. I want you to come forward and say to the minister, “I know I’m saved, but I want to make an appointment for my baptism.” And, we’ll make an appointment for a baptism with you at a mutually accepted time, and you’ll have the great joy of being obedient to the Lord Jesus.

There’s a third category I want to invite to come forward this morning. These are they who have been baptized and have been members of some church elsewhere, and this is where you worship now. I’m going to invite you to come forward and say, “I want to place my membership here.” Now, listen carefully: God’s plan is that every Christian be a member of a local New Testament church—if not Bellevue, one like it somewhere. But, if this is where you worship and where God speaks to you, this is, most likely, where you need to belong.

So, some are coming, saying, “I’m trusting Jesus.” Others are coming, saying, “I want believer’s baptism.” Others are coming, saying, “I want to place my membership here.” One last category—if you don’t fit into any of these others, as such, but you need prayer—the song that Dale sang: your “sails are torn,” “your ship is battered” (Ray Boltz)—and you need somebody just to pray with you and for you, somebody will do that this morning.

Now, bow your heads one more time in prayer. Heavenly Father, I pray in the strong name of Jesus that You will open hearts, and don’t let anybody stand on the wrong side of the gate to the city of refuge. O God, bring the lost to Jesus. And, those who have confessed Him in their hearts, help them now to confess Him with their mouths. In Jesus’s name. Amen.

Let’s stand together. You step out and come on the first stanza. Come right now.

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Christ, Our City of Refuge

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 6, 1993

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 20:1–9

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses."
JOSHUA 20:2

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Introduction

Turn to the book of Joshua, please—Joshua chapter 20. We are going to be preaching out of the Old Testament, but we are going to be preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to say this—and I have said it many times from this pulpit: All of the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. When the New Testament had not yet been written, the Lord Jesus said to those who were with Him, *"Search the scriptures; for…they are they which testify of me."* (John 5:39) And He showed *"them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."* (Luke 24:27) And that's the Old Testament.

All of the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. Please don't get the idea that the Old Testament is about something else and the New Testament finally gets to the subject of Jesus Christ. Every book has a hero, and Jesus Christ is the hero of the Bible. It is His book. It is a "Him book": it is about Him. And if you read the Bible and don't see the Lord Jesus Christ, you'd better go back and re-read it. There, in prophecy; there, in precept; there, in example; there, in shadow; there, in type; there, in illustration—there's some way, in plain print or standing in the shadows, some way you will see the Lord Jesus

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Christ. And in this twentieth chapter of Joshua we see a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ in the cities of refuge.

Now, remember that Jesus is the hero of the Bible, salvation is the theme of the Bible, and therefore illustrations abound in the Bible, because God wants us to see His Son, the Lord Jesus, and God wants us to receive His salvation. And here we see something very wonderful.

I am going to begin reading Joshua chapter 20, and I am going to read the first nine verses: *"The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge,"*—now, underscore that: *"cities of refuge"*—*"whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: that the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled. And they appointed…"*—now, here they are, six cities. I want you to listen to them—*"And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem"*—that's the second one—*"in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron"*—that's the third one—*"in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer"*—that's number four—*"in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth"*—that's number five—*"in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan"*—Golan is the sixth—*"out of the tribe of Manasseh. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation."* (Joshua 20:1–9)

I. The Nature of These Cities

Now, what is all of this about? Well, this is a time of primitive justice and organization, not very much like our court system today. But in that day a man might unwittingly kill a neighbor. The Bible gives an illustration of this. I was reading it earlier this morning in the book of Deuteronomy. Perhaps a man is chopping wood and the axe handle flies off and kills someone. He didn't mean to kill him. But they also had a law in that day that the next of kin could take vengeance. He was called "the avenger of blood." It was a

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vendetta. He said, “You killed my brother: I will kill you.” Justice was raw. The court system was somewhat primitive.

But God in mercy said, “We need some place where this person, who is somewhat an unintentional slayer, can flee; somewhere that he can go and be safe.” And so, God said, “Take six cities, and we’ll call them ‘cities of refuge.’ And the person who has an avenger of blood on his trail, the person who is being hunted down to be slain, may flee into one of these cities of refuge, tell the elders at the gate, ‘Help me; I need your help,’ and they will bring him in and give him a place to stay. And he can stay there till they adjudicate him in a sentence, release him, or if the avenger of blood is still there, they can keep him there until it is safe for him to return to his loved ones and go home.” Now, that’s the cities of refuge.

“Well,” you say, “pastor, what does that have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ?” Well, I am glad you asked that question. I want you to turn over to the book of Hebrews here for a moment, and then we are going to get down deep into the message. Look, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 6, a very interesting passage of Scripture. In Hebrews chapter 6—and I begin reading here in verse 17: *“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie…”*—and, friend, somebody asked, “Is there anything God cannot do?” Well, God can’t lie, I can tell you that much. Let me back up and read verse 18 again, because I interrupted it—*“that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us…”*—this is the same word, the same idea, that those of us who are saved, those of us who live in this day, this age, we—*“have fled for refuge”*—unto the Lord Jesus Christ—*“to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”* (Hebrews 6:17–20)

Now, what does all of that say? That is saying that Jesus Christ is to us a city of refuge. When the avenger of blood is after us, when judgment is on our trail, we can flee to the Lord Jesus Christ and we can be saved. So the first thing I want you to think of is the saving nature of these cities. These cities picture—clearly picture—the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our rock and our refuge.

II. The Nearness of These Cities

Now, here’s something else I want you to see: Not only the nature of these cities, but I want you to see the nearness of these cities. These cities were strategically placed all over the land of Israel. For example, there were some in the east, some in the west,

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some in the north, some in the south, and some right in the very center. These cities were strategically placed, because if they were cities of refuge, you had to be able to get to them in a hurry—do you see?

I want to say something else to those of you who may not be saved today. You may have the idea that one of these days you will be saved when God is especially near. And maybe, perhaps in some church service, God is going to move up next to you and say, "This is your time." But, friend, the Lord is always near unto you, just as these cities of refuge were always near.

Turn, if you would, to Romans chapter 10, and look in verse 6—a very wonderful, wonderful passage of Scripture—Romans 10 and verse 6. Here God is telling you how to be saved. And if you're not a Christian, and you want to be saved, and it just seems like God is a billion light years away from you, somewhere sitting in the heavens or somewhere distant in some foreign land, listen. God says here very clearly in Romans 10, verse 6, *"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)"*—if you're saying, "Oh, if the Lord could just come down out of heaven, if He would just step out of heaven today," God says, "Don't say that, to bring Christ down from above"; or, verse 7—*"or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)"* If you would say, "Oh, such a shame that Jesus Christ came to this earth! He suffered, bled, and died; but they killed Him, and He's dead," God says, "Don't say that, 'Who shall ascend into the deep to bring up Christ again from the dead?'" *"But what saith it?"* Now, listen: *"The word is nigh thee,"*—now, what does the word *nigh* mean? Well, that's just an old-fashioned word for "near." "The word is near thee." How close is it? Do you want me to tell you today how close Jesus Christ is to you?—*"even in thy mouth, and in thy heart:"*—now you can't get more personal than in your mouth and in your heart. That's how close the Word is to you. "Well," you say, "how did the Word get into my mouth? And how did the Word get into my heart?" Well, I'm putting it there right now. Listen—*"that is, the word of faith, which we preach…"*—you see, what I'm doing to you right now is, I am putting something in your heart and I am putting something in your mouth: I'm putting the Word of God in your heart and in your mouth. I am doing that to you right now. You're having something done to you. I am doing something to you right now: I am putting the Word of God in your mouth and in your heart. You say, "That doesn't make any sense to me." Well, just keep reading—*"what saith it? The word is [near] thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;"*—now, listen—*"that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* (Romans 10:6–10)

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Now I put the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart and in your mouth, but that doesn't make you a Christian; that just makes Jesus very close to you. He's very close to you. He is so close right now—He is in your heart and in your mouth—but you are not yet saved. What must you do? Well, you must believe with your heart and confess with your mouth. See, I put Him there. I am telling you that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I am telling you that He suffered, bled, and died for you. I am telling you that He is your city of refuge. I am telling you that He is very near to you—so near, He's in your heart and in your mouth. But that does you no good until you believe with your heart and confess with your mouth. You see, He's there. If you want to be saved, you can be saved. Anybody listening to me today who wants to be saved can be saved. Jesus Christ is so exceedingly close to you.

Now, the nature of these cities is they were cities of refuge. The nearness of these cities is that they were close to everybody. There were cities in the east, cities in the west, cities in the north, cities in the south, and in case somebody else needed cities, in the center of the land. Strategically near were these cities. As a matter of fact, they had laws in that land that the roads had to be very broad leading to these cities of refuge—very broad roads. And not only did the roads need to be broad, but all the obstacles had to be cleared out of these roads. You couldn't leave rocks in the road. The priests would go out regularly and inspect and examine these roads.

Not only that, but they had to make certain that the bridges were built if there were any streams. If a person needed to get to the city of refuge, he didn't need to come to any dead ends. And they had signs that were clearly written—*"Miqlat,"* that's what the sign would say—and an arrow pointing; and the word meant "refuge"—"refuge this way." At every intersection—nobody had to guess about it: "The wayfaring man, though a fool, could find his way therein," (Isaiah 35:8) because when you need a city of refuge, friend, you need one. If there's somebody on your heels trying to kill you, you don't need to fumble around and say, "Which way to go?"

I am telling you, the way was simple; the way was plain; the way was marked; the way was easy; the way was near—and so it is with you. Friend, if you miss Jesus Christ today, it's not because He's hard to find. You don't have to say, "O Lord, come down, please, out of heaven. Who shall ascend up to bring Christ down?" You don't have to say, "O Lord, come up out of the grave." He says, "I have come down. I have come up. I am near." And just because He lives, we can face tomorrow, as we sang.

He is here. Friend, He's closer to you than that person sitting next to you. He is closer to you today than the clothes on your body. And yet you may die and go to hell if you don't avail yourself of the city of refuge. How close is the Lord Jesus? *"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart…the word of faith, which we preach."* (Romans 10:8) But you must believe—believe—with your heart; confess with your

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mouth. (Romans 10:9) You will be saved. You'll be so close, yet so far away.

III. The Names of These Cities

I want you to think not only of the nature of these cities, and the nearness of these cities, but think about the names of these cities. You know, the Bible is a wonderful book. There are six names here.

A. Kedesh Speaks of a Holy Place

Look at them in verse 7: *"And they appointed Kedesh."* (Joshua 20:7) Do you know what *Kedesh* means? It means "holiness." They took one city and they called it "holiness." Why? Because we serve a holy Savior—because our Lord is holy, and He is our holiness. And I thank God for that.

Let me give you some scriptures. I have given these to you before, but I want to give them to you again. Zechariah 13 and verse 1: *"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."* (Zechariah 13:1) You and I are sinners. Therefore, the place to which we flee needs to be a holy place. And Christ alone is our holiness. The same Hebrews that tells us that He is our city of refuge tells us in Hebrews 12, verse 14, *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* (Hebrews 12:14) You need a holy place, friend, and Jesus is that city of refuge. I am a sinner; you're a sinner. We have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) And what are we going to do with our sin? Well, Christ, our city of refuge, is also our place of holiness. That's what the word *Kedesh* means: "holiness."

Now, how else can I get my sin forgiven except by a holy Savior? That's the reason Jesus had to be virgin-born: in order to be holy. Had Jesus been born like I was born and like you were born, He would have the nature of Adam, not the Son of God. But He was born of a virgin. He did not have the inherited sin nature of Adam, because *"in Adam all die."* (1 Corinthians 15:22) Christ is holy—He is holy. And because He is holy, He can be our Savior. A sinner can't be anybody's Savior. If you have dirty clothes and you want to wash dirty clothes in dirty water, that won't get your dirty clothes clean. Something dirty cannot make something else clean.

B. Shechem Speaks of a Helpful Place

And so, the first thing I want to tell you about the cities of refuge: They speak of the holiness of Christ. But not only was it a holy place—look at the next city there: It's Shechem—Shechem. The word there means "shoulder" or "support." And it speaks not only of a holy place, but it speaks of a helpful place. Do you know that Christ is the One who carries your burdens on His shoulder? Are you burdened down today? You say, "Pastor, you don't even know—you can't even begin to know—the problems that I

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have." Well, I am pointing you to the city of refuge, and the name of that city is "shoulder," or *Shechem*. Do you know what the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6? It speaks of the Lord Jesus, and it says, *"The government shall be upon his shoulder."* (Isaiah 9:6)

Do you remember there in the in parable of the lost sheep in Luke chapter 15, verse 5, when our Lord found the lost sheep—what did He do? He laid it upon His shoulder—do you remember that?—and brought it home. He just laid it upon His shoulder. (Luke 15:5) When I was in Israel, we went to Bethlehem and went out into a field. And a shepherd handed me a sheep, a little lamb. I took that little lamb into my arms and held it there for a while. And then I took that little lamb and I put him up on my shoulders. At that time there was a lamb with six legs—four of his, and two of mine—and I just laid him on my shoulder. And I got to thinking, "You know, this is what Jesus Christ has done for me: He took that lost sheep and He laid it upon His shoulder, and He brought it home."

C. **Hebron Speaks of a Harmonious Place**

You see, when we come to the Lord Jesus, we have a place of holiness, and we have a place of helpfulness. And then, he came to the third city there in verse 7—it's the word *Hebron*. (Joshua 20:7) And in the Hebrew, that means "fellowship." So there is a place of holiness, a place of helpfulness, and a place of harmony. We have fellowship with our Lord Jesus when we come into the city of refuge.

Remember what John said in 1 John chapter 1 and verse 3, that you *"may have fellowship with us: and…our fellowship is with the Father, and…his Son Jesus Christ."* (1 John 1:3) Or remember in 1 Corinthians 1:9: *"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto] the fellowship of his Son."* (1 Corinthians 1:9) It's not by happenstance that one of these cities was named *Hebron*—because we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have fellowship with Him. I had fellowship with Him this morning. When my alarm clock went off this morning at 6:30, I opened my eyes and I said, "Lord Jesus, I love you. I greet you today." I didn't do that so I could tell you about it; it just came into my mind right now. I just said, "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, I love you. I greet you this morning." I am sitting there listening to that music, and as Dale was singing, "Oh, what a Savior," my heart was saying, "Oh, what a Savior! Oh, what a Savior!" The fellowship we have with the Lord Jesus walks with me and talks with me. He's real.

D. **Bezer Speaks of a Hiding Place**

A place of holiness, a place of helpfulness, a place of harmony—that's the place we come to. And then, the next place is Bezer—in verse 8. (Joshua 20:8) Do you know what that means? Oh, friend, listen. That means "fortification; stronghold." Not only is

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He a harmonious place; He's a hiding place. Do you remember that scripture that says in Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 10, *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe"*? (Proverbs 18:10) I love that. *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower:"*—a hiding place—*"the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."* These are a means of stronghold, fortification. The devil would love to get to me; he would love to get to you. But he cannot, as we hide in the Lord Jesus Christ.

E. Ramoth Speaks of an Exalted Place

And then, Ramoth—do you know what that means? Well, that means "high place"; it means "exalted." And it speaks of our Lord, who is exalted. Acts 2, verse 33: *"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted"* (Acts 2:33)—speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:9: *"God also hath highly exalted him."* (Philippians 2:9)

But not only is He exalted; when we are in Him, we are exalted with Him. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 6—the Bible says God hath set the Lord Jesus in heavenly places; (Ephesians 1:20) and then He has *"raised us up…and made us sit together [with Him] in heavenly places."* (Ephesians 2:6) I got a letter from a friend a while back. At the end of the letter, he didn't say, "Keep looking up, Adrian"; he said, "Keep looking down." I like that—"keep looking down"—because God has exalted Him, and we are seated together with Him. And so, that's what the name *Ramoth* means.

F. Golan Speaks of a Separated but Joyous Place

And then, the last one of these names is Golan. We hear a lot about the Golan Heights today. We were in the Golan Heights—a very beautiful place. But the word *Golan* means "separated"; it means "separation that brings joy." That's what the word literally means: "separation that brings joy." And Christ is our sanctification, our separation. Remember what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 17 and 18? *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."* (2 Corinthians 6:17) *"Be ye separate"*: that's what he means. And then he says, *"And I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."* (2 Corinthians 6:17–18) *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate."*

You say, "Pastor, you know, that's the trouble with you Baptist preachers: you're always saying, 'Give this up! Give this up! Give this up!'" I'm not talking to you about giving something up, friend; I'm talking to you about gaining something. Jesus said, *"Come from out among them, and be ye separate…and I will receive you."*

Now, what does that mean: "I'll be a Father to you"? Who wouldn't give up dirt for diamond? Who wouldn't give up swill for nectar? The only things Jesus Christ asks you to give up are the things that will hurt you, that don't make you healthy, happy, holy. God wants you to have it. You know, it's an amazing thing that you have to beg people to be saved. That, to me, is an amazing thing. That's like begging a starving man to eat

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at a banquet. That's like begging an imprisoned man to walk out the door when the door is open wide. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ, He is all of these things: He is a holy place; He is a helpful place; He is a harmonious place; He is a highly exalted place; He is a happy place. All that my soul needs I find in the Lord Jesus, when I flee to Him for refuge.

IV. The Neglect of These Cities

But there is a last thing I want you to see today. Now I want you to see not only the nature of these cities that speak of Christ our refuge; I want you to see not only the nearness of these cities—how near the Lord Jesus Christ is to you; I want you to see not only the names of these cities—which, each one of them speaks some way of the character of Christ and the blessings of Christ to you; but—I almost wish I didn't have to say this last thing—I want you to think of the neglect of these cities. There are so many who are listening to me right now who, sadly, neglect these cities.

Turn with me to the book of 2 Samuel—let me give you an illustration here—2 Samuel—you can find it—chapter 3. King David was Israel's greatest King. King David had surrounded himself with some men. One of the names of these men was Abner. Another name was Joab. Now, Joab was the Schwarzkopf of his day. He was David's commander-in-chief. He was a mighty warrior. And Abner was a great man and a mighty man. But one day Abner had done something he didn't mean to do: Abner killed Joab's brother, Asahel. And Abner did not mean to do it. That is, he did not do it wittingly; he did it unwittingly. And therefore there was the ability for Abner to flee to the city of refuge, and he could have done that.

But now I want you to see what happened. Look, if you will, in 2 Samuel 3, verse 27: *"And when Abner was returned to Hebron…"*—now, remember, Hebron was what? It was a city of refuge. Remember what the name meant? "Fellowship"—*"when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother"* (2 Samuel 3:27)—that is, Joab's brother. Joab was on a vendetta. Joab was the avenger of blood. And Abner was the one who should have been in the city of refuge. And it was right at the very gates of the city of refuge that Joab killed Abner.

Now, continue to read here in this same chapter—verse 32: *"And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king"*—that is, David—*"lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him."* (2 Samuel 3:32–34) Over whom? Over Abner, who was slain. And then, skip on down to verse 38: *"And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a*

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great man fallen this day in Israel?" (2 Samuel 3:38)

Now, let's get the scene. Let's see what has happened here. Joab and David and Abner are talking together. As long as David is there, Joab is not going to do anything, because Joab knows that David loves Abner. But then David, the king, leaves. Now, this scene is taking place right at Hebron, right in the gate of the city. And Joab says to Abner, "Hey, Ab, come over here. I want to talk to you." And like a fool, Abner just walks over to where Joab is. Joab takes out his sharp knife, puts it under his fifth rib—just like that—and Abner slumps down dead. And they go and tell David, and they say, "David, Abner is dead." David said, "He died like a fool. Why did he die like a fool?" And David lifted up his voice and he wept for Abner. No reason that Abner should have died. He wept. He said, "He died like a fool. He was a brave man, a prince, and he died like a fool."

Why? Why? I'll tell you why: He died right at the gate of the city of refuge—right at the gate of the city of refuge! I mean, there was his refuge! All he had to do was step in and be safe! But, you see, the problem was, he was deceived—he was deceived! He thought that Joab was his friend, and Joab was his enemy. But as you read this in this third chapter, it says that Joab called him aside as though he wanted to speak quietly to him: "Man, come over here by me. Just come over here. I just want to talk to you a little bit." Do you know the Bible tells us that Satan is a deceiver? He's a deceiver. And Satan's motive, and his murder, and his method, is a lie. Jesus said in John chapter 8 and verse 44: *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth."* (John 8:44) His motive, his murder, his method, is a lie. He is a deceiver.

And there are many in this congregation, and many who will be listening to me by television, who get the idea that somehow Satan is your friend. And, by the way, you don't have to be a stupid man to think this way. Abner was a great man. He was a prince, David said. I mean, it would be one thing if some person who didn't know his right hand from his left were to do this; but that's not the thing. David said, "Don't you know that a great man, a prince, is fallen this day?" And he fell because of a cunning deception.

I am talking to some princes here today; some business top waters today. Some of you are bankers and lawyers. I am talking to some college professors today. I am talking to some judges today. I am talking to some scientists today. And you've got a lot of candlepower up here. You know how to get things done. You're like Abner. You're a great man. You're a prince. But do you know your problem? You may be deceived and die and go to hell right at the gate of the city of refuge.

Now, that's a sad thing, isn't it? I mean, it's a sad thing for anybody to be lost. Do you know, when you die, they may bring you to a funeral home or church, and all your

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friends will dress up and come, and they will put you in a beautiful casket. Maybe there will be a lot of Cadillacs or Mercedes and BMWs outside. And somebody may say, "Here lies a great man. He was a business genius. He was a great political leader. He did so much for this community. What a great man he was! May his soul rest in peace." But his soul will be in hell before the undertaker learns that he is dead. "A great man"—"a great man"—David said—"but he died, and he died like a fool, right outside the city of refuge."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "The man who does not prepare for death and knows he's going to die is worse than a fool; he's a madman." Jesus asked this question: *"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mark 8:36–37) No matter what else a man does—no matter what else he has—if he dies outside of Jesus Christ, he dies like a fool. Isn't that right? Only two ways to die: in the Lord and out of the Lord. Jesus is the city of refuge.

Conclusion

Billy Sunday was the Billy Graham of his day. Billy Sunday told a story. I don't think I have ever been able to forget after I read that story. Billy Sunday said there was a man who had committed a crime in Pennsylvania, and they were going to hang him. But his mother loved him, and his mother went to see the governor, whose name was Pollack—the governor of Pennsylvania. And she wanted the governor to pardon this man. Now, the governor was a good man, a godly man, a Christian man. And the governor felt that the man had committed a crime that was worthy of death, and the man ought to die.

This woman, the day before the execution, came into the governor's office. She didn't have an appointment. She said, "I want to see the governor." The secretary said, "I am sorry, you…" She said, "I must see him." She said, "I am sorry." She said, "I must see him," and she walked right on past. The secretary said, "Wait! Governor, I am sorry! I am sorry!" This woman got down on her hands and her knees, and she began to weep in the carpet, and clawed her way to the governor's desk, and said, "Please, please, pardon my son!"

The governor said, "Madam, I can't do that. But," he said, "I'll tell you what I will do: I will go see your son. I'll talk to him about his soul. I'll go see if he is saved. He's ready to die." And the good governor of Pennsylvania went into that jail cell. The jailer opened the door, and Pollack walked in. He said, "Hello, son." The boy never lifted his face. He said, "Son, I've come to talk with you. Can we talk?" The boy never lifted his face. He said, "Son, would you give me the courtesy of listening to me for a while?" The boy never lifted his face, never uttered a grunt.

The governor got up and said, "Well, I must go." And the door shut, and the governor

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walked off. And while the governor walked off, the keeper of the prison—the jailer, the warden—said, “Goodbye, governor.” And when he said that—“Goodbye, governor”—the boy stood up straight. He said to the jailer, “Who was that man?” He said, “Why, that’s the governor. Didn’t you know that?” He said, “The governor? Do you mean that man who was talking to me was the one man in this world who could set me free? the one man who could pardon me? the governor? That was the governor?” He said, “Yes, I thought you knew.” He said, “I had no idea that he was the governor. I didn’t even talk to him, and he could have set me free.” And that young man died by hanging. The man who could have set him free was absolutely right next to him, and he wouldn’t even talk to him.

And I am afraid there are some in this building, and some who are listening to me later, and some who are listening to me by television, who will die and go to hell with Jesus Christ right next to you. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.” (Romans 10:8) Oh, how He loves you! And, oh, how He wants to save you! If I could do it for you, I would; but I cannot. If I could receive Jesus Christ for you, I would; but I cannot. I have preached as best as I know how.

But I want to say to those of you in the balcony and those of you down here that Jesus Christ is so very near to you; the city of refuge is there. And I want to say to you that Satan is a liar. He is a deceiver; he is a liar. And if you die without Jesus Christ, you die as a fool dies, because there is no need for you to die because Christ—Christ—is your refuge. And the gate is open, and He says, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28) Why, why, why do people die and go to hell when they don’t need to? Because Jesus says, “Come—come to me.”

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Christ, the Sinner's Refuge

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 26, 1995 **Time: 0930**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 20:1–9

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses."
JOSHUA 20:2

Outline

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Introduction

We are in an interim time in our preaching program. We go from a series to a series normally, and before long, we're going to be beginning, this spring, a series on the home—actually, applying the Ten Commandments to the home. And, the title of the sermon series will be "A Perfect '10' for Homes that Win." And, I'm very excited about that. But, I'm just getting ready to do that. And, I thought we would take this interim period just for some evangelistic messages, just to share with you some of my favorite themes that, through the years, I have enjoyed preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ and about helping people to do just exactly what Greg sang about—and that is to choose Jesus. And, may I say at the outset of this message that if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in great peril and you're also missing a wonderful blessing? If I had a thousand lives to give, I would give every one of them to Jesus. I mean that with all of my heart. I would be a Christian if there were no Heaven or no Hell. Now, there are both. But, just to know the Lord Jesus Christ in this life is *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8).

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You say, “Well, Adrian, don’t you have problems?” Yes, I do, and so do you. Saved and lost have problems. *“Man that is born of woman is…full of trouble”* (Job 14:1). So, being saved is not an exit from trouble. As a matter of fact, sometimes, when you live for the Lord Jesus, you get into trouble because you’re living for the Lord Jesus. But, you see, the Christian has someone to help to bear his burden. And, the joy of the Lord doesn’t take away the pain; it just helps you to bear the pain. And then, the Christian has somebody who makes sense out of all of it. *“We know that all things work together for good to [those who] love God…who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). And also, a Christian—any heartache, any sorrow that he will ever have, he’ll have this side of the grave. But, for the unsaved, any joy they will ever have, they’ll have this side of the grave. It makes sense to choose the Lord Jesus.

Now, I want you to turn, if you would, please, to Joshua chapter 20, and I’m going to read with you the first 9 verses. And, they deal with the Old Testament cities of refuge. You say, “Well, Pastor, I don’t know what a city of refuge is, and I don’t know how that deals with the Lord Jesus Christ.” Well, I’m going to explain to you what a city of refuge is and how it deals with the Lord Jesus. And, I want you to learn this principle—that God wants people to be saved so much that He fills the Bible with illustrations and pictures, and illustrations abound. As a matter of fact, the key to understanding the Bible is that, like any book, it has a theme. Salvation is the theme. Like any book, it has a villain. Satan is the villain. Like any book—I’m talking, now, about a novel or a story. It has a theme, it has a villain, and it has a hero. The Lord Jesus is the hero of the Bible. And so, standing somewhere in the shadows, as you read the Bible, you’ll find the Lord Jesus. And, as you read the Old Testament and the New Testament, you’ll find, in many places, the way of salvation being made very clear.

Now, let’s begin reading in chapter 20, verse 1: *“[And] the LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly”*—this is what we would call “reckless manslaughter”—*“may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbor unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled. And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem*

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in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation" (Joshua 20:1–9).

"Now Pastor, tell me, what does that have to do with salvation? Well, what does that have to do with the Lord Jesus?" Well, a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus. There are four things I want you to notice as we look at this passage today and as we look at these cities of refuge and really consider Christ, the sinner's refuge.

I. The Saving Nature of These Cities

And, the very first thing I want you to notice is the saving nature of these cities—the saving nature of these cities. These cities were to be a place of safety, a place of security, a place of refuge.

Now, what would happen would be this: sometimes a man would unwittingly, without premeditation, kill another person. Maybe he would be working and failed to have his axe head on tightly, and as he's cutting wood, the axe head would fly off and kill someone. Or, perhaps, in lifting a heavy load, the load would fall on someone—or maybe even as men are tousling and fighting. But, the man did not really intend to kill the other person, but he fell and struck his head upon a rock and died. This person would be guilty not of cold-blooded murder, but guilty, nonetheless, of reckless homicide. And, they had a law in Israel, and the law in Israel was this—that if you killed one of my relatives, and I'm related to you, then I must overtake you and punish you. It was a law of like a vigilante. The nearest of kin would be called an "avenger of blood."

Well, now let's suppose that a person had unwittingly, without premeditation, without cold blood, killed someone. And, let's suppose that the avenger of blood is on his trail to even the score. He needs a place to go to so some judges can hear the case, and he can go before the elders and the congregation. And, God, very wisely and lovingly, set up some cities, and we call these cities "cities of refuge." You say, "Pastor, does that really speak of the Lord Jesus?" Well, put in your margin this verse: Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 18. Now, our Lord, here, is talking about our salvation, and this is what He says in the New Testament: *"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation"*—now, here's the phrase I want—*"who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"* (Hebrews 6:18). And, the writer of Hebrews, who was soaked in Hebrew history, pictures the Lord Jesus Christ as our city of refuge, and he says, *"We…have strong consolation"* (Hebrews

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6:18)—"we have an incredible hope, because we have a Savior who is our city of refuge."

And so, today, I want to tell you that there is an avenger of blood on your trail. There is justice that is hard on your heels, and you need mercy—you need security; you need a hiding place. His name is Jesus, and He is your city of refuge. So, the first thing—the saving nature of these cities.

II. The Significant Names of These Cities

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see: I want you to see the significant names of these cities. In verses 7 and 8, we are given the names of these cities. And, the Holy Spirit—and all scripture is given by divine inspiration—the Holy Spirit of God has set out six names. Our Lord became a man. Six is the number of man. And, these six names speak of the character of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

A. Kedesh: A Holy Place

In verse 7, you see the word Kedesh (Joshua 20:7), and Kedesh means, actually, "sanctuary" or "holiness." That's what we sang about today. This city—it was a holy place—a holy place. And, every one of us needs a holy place to flee to, and His name is Jesus. You see, Christ alone is our holiness. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14 says, *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"* (Hebrews 12:14). God requires—yea, God demands—holiness. Well, I don't have any holiness; you don't have any holiness, but we need His holiness. And, Christ is our city of refuge; He is our holy place. And, when we go to Him, our holiness is found in Him, because as you would be in the city of Kedesh, the city of holiness, you are in Christ, the place of holiness. Now, that's the reason that Christ is a holy Savior. We just heard Greg sing, "Lord, I thank You not primarily for Bethlehem, but I thank You for Calvary." But, Calvary would have been meaningless apart from Bethlehem, because He was born of a virgin. He was holy. He lived a holy life, a sinless life. He died a vicarious death. You can't make dirty clothes clean by washing dirty clothes in dirty water. A Savior who's not a holy Savior is not a Savior at all. We need One who is absolutely, perfectly holy, that He can take away our sin.

B. Shechem: A Helpful Place

And then, look at the next name, Shechem, if you will, in verse 7 (Joshua 20:7). Shechem—the very word *Shechem*—means "shoulder," or it has the idea of strength. And, not only do we have in Christ a holy place, but we have a helpful place. You see, Christ is our strong Savior. Christ bears us upon His shoulder. You know, over there in Isaiah chapter 9:6, the Bible says what? *"The government shall be upon his shoulder"* (Isaiah 9:6). You look over there in Luke chapter 15, where the good shepherd went out

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after the sheep that was lost, and the Bible says, when the good shepherd found that sheep—and I've always been blessed by this—*"he layeth it [upon] his shoulders"* (Luke 15:5). Now, how did that sheep get home? That sheep did not come home on its own four legs; that sheep came home on two legs—the legs of the Savior. He put it on His shoulder. That's how I'm coming home: I'm going all the way to Heaven on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus Christ, because I have come into Christ, my city of refuge.

C. Hebron: A Happy Place

And then, look, if you will, at the next one—the next one you find is the name Hebron (Joshua 20:7). And, the word *Hebron* means "fellowship," because when you come to the holy place and the helpful place, you come to the happy place. And, when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you come to a place of *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8) in the Lord Jesus. That's the reason the Apostle John said in 1 John chapter 1 and verse 3: *"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and…our fellowship is with the Father, and…his Son [the Lord] Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3).

Did you know that when I'm calling you today to be saved, to come to the Lord Jesus, I'm not calling you to a funeral; I'm calling you to a feast? I'm not calling you to misery; I'm calling you to joy. First Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 9: *"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"* (1 Corinthians 1:9). It dawned on me one day—well, I guess a number of years ago—that I really, literally, do have fellowship with Jesus. I mean, He's not somebody I talk about—I know Jesus. I don't say that braggingly, but it's a fact: I know Jesus. If you're saved, you know Him; you don't know *about* Him. You can say it and mean it:

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.
—C. AUSTIN MILES

He's my own personal Savior, just like He is your own personal Savior. He is my city of refuge. I have fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus. He became my holy place. He became my helping place. He became my happy place.

D. Bezer: A Hiding Place

And then, look at the next one in verse 8 (Joshua 20:8): Bezer. And, the word *Bezer* means "stronghold"; it means "fortification." It's a place of security. And so, the Lord Jesus is also my hiding place. He is my fortress. He is my security. You know, the Bible says, *"The name of the LORD is a [high] tower: [and] the righteous runneth into it, and [are] safe"* (Proverbs 18:10). That's in Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 10. And, there is a

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hiding place that keeps us safe until the storm passes over. Thank God that we can come to the Lord Jesus Christ, in our Bezer, and find that hiding place.

E. Ramoth: A High Place

And then, look, if you will, at the next verse: the next city, in verse 8, is Ramoth (Joshua 20:8). And, the name *Ramoth* means "exalted"; it speaks of a lofty place. And, not only is the Lord Jesus my hiding place—He's my high place—He is my high place. The Bible says, "He has set my feet upon high ground" (Psalm 18:33). And, why can I have a high place? Because He is in a high place. Put this in your margin—Acts chapter 2 and verse 33: *"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted"* (Acts 2:33). That's what the name *Ramoth* means—exalted. Or, Philippians chapter 2, verse 9, speaking of Jesus: *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him"* (Philippians 2:9). And so, when you're in this hiding place, you're in the highest place. You're seated in the heavenlies with the Lord Jesus, and everything is beneath His feet. Hallelujah! What a Savior! He alone is worthy of praise.

F. Golan: A Harmonious Place

And then, the last is Golan—in verse 8 (Joshua 20:8). And, the word *Golan* means "separated," but it actually means "separation that brings joy"—"separation that brings joy." And, that speaks so much to me of the joy of the Lord, which is our strength. And, we've already said that He is a happy place over there in Hebron. But here, again, He is a happy place and a harmonious place—a harmonious place. Why? Because we have this joy of being with Him. Let me give you a verse—2 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 17 and 18: *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Corinthians 6:17–18). Now, *Golan* means "separation that brings joy"—when you come out from among them. You cannot come into the city without coming out of the world. And, you go into that city, and in that city is that perfect fellowship, in that harmonious place—all of these things tell us, folks…—and in that happy place, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Strategic Nearness of These Cities

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see. I talked to you about the saving nature of the city, and ''ve talked to you about the significant names of the city. Think with me for just a moment about the strategic nearness of these cities. Now, these were to be cities of refuge. And, because they were cities of refuge, people needed to be able to get to the city very quickly. I mean, if you're in danger, if somebody is coming after you to kill you, you've got to have a hiding place, a happy place, a holy place, a high place, a harmonious place. You've got to have it in a hurry. And so, these cities were put in the

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East, they were put in the West, they were put in the South, they were put in the North, and they were put in the center of the land of Israel so that it would be very near, no matter where you are. Now, that reminds us again of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Bible says what? *"The LORD is [near to] all…that call upon him"—"the LORD is [near to] all…that call upon him"* (Psalm 145:18). If you were to take a map, and take these six cities, and just put the push pins in the map of Israel, you would find out how strategically near all of these cities were, because God, in mercy, wanted everybody to have an opportunity to come into the city of refuge.

Now, what does that tell me about the Lord Jesus Christ and you today? Suppose you're here today—you are guilty; you deserve punishment. The reckless manslaughter is on your slate. And, there is an avenger of blood on your trail, which is the judgment that your sin requires, and you need to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, I've got wonderful news for you. Here is the wonderful, wonderful news. It's found in the New Testament, in Romans chapter 10, verses 6 through 9. Listen to what God says in Romans chapter 10, verses 6 through 9: *"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it?"*—listen to this—*"The word is nigh thee"*—now, let's just change that to say, "The Word is near thee," because that's Old English for "near"—*"The word is [near] thee"*—well, how near is it?—*"even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:6–9). *"What saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart"* (Romans 10:8). That's how close it is.

Do you want to be saved today? Well, let me tell you how to be saved. You do not have to go on an expedition to Heaven. You don't have to leave this earth, ascend up into the Glory, walk into the throne room, and say, "Father God, we need a Savior down here on earth. We'd be very grateful if You would allow Your Son, the Lord Jesus, to leave Heaven and come down to the earth, because we need Him so badly." You don't have to do that. You don't have to say, "Who shall ascend into Heaven to bring Christ down?" I'll tell you what else you don't have to do if He did come down: you don't have to go down, make your way into Hell, wherever Hell is. You don't have to go down there to that terrible place and say, "Oh, if we could only get Jesus out of this place!" You know, Jesus took our Hell for us, and He died. And, He was buried, and He went into the realm of the dead. And, you don't have to say, "But what good is a dead Savior? If we could only bring Him up from the dead again! Oh, if we could only do that, then we could be saved." He says you don't have to do that. You don't have to go up into Heaven to bring Christ down; you don't have to go down to Hell to bring Him up. Why?

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He's already come down, hasn't He? He's already been raised, hasn't He? Already! And then, he says, *"But what saith it?"*—*"what saith it?"*—listen to me—*"The word is [near you]"* (Romans 10:8).

Just how near is salvation? Just how near is your city of refuge today? I want to tell you how close He is, how near He is. This is incredible. It almost sounds funny when you first hear it. *"The word is nigh thee, [it is] even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach"* (Romans 10:8). Now, look at it: *"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith"* (Romans 10:8). You say, "Where is it?" It's in your mouth.

If you're listening to me by television right now, I want to tell you something: Jesus is so close to you—He's in your mouth. You say, "Now, you're being silly, Adrian." No, I'm not. He's in your mouth. I mean, He's even closer than that—He's in your heart. "Well," you say, "if He's in my mouth and in my heart, then why am I not saved?" It's incredible how close you can be and still not be saved. *"What saith it? The word is [near] thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart"*—you say, "Well, how did it get in my mouth, and how did it get in my heart?" I just put it in there. You say, "Well, Adrian, how did you put it in there?"—*"[by] the word of faith, which we preach"* (Romans 10:8). Isn't that what he says? The Word of faith is—*"the word is nigh thee"*—it is close to thee. How close is it? It's—*"even in [your] mouth, and in [your] heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach"* (Romans 10:8).

Now, what do you do with it? What do you do with it once I put it in your mouth and once I put it in your heart? You confess it: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth…believe in thine heart…[you'll] be saved"* (Romans 10:9). I mean, that's how close you are. Look at it: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth"* (Romans 10:9). The Word is there. Just go ahead and say, "Jesus is Lord." The Word is there. Just go ahead and say, "I believe it." That is how close He is to you. *"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: [it is] the word of faith, [that] we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth…and…believe [with your] heart…[you'll] be saved"* (Romans 10:9). Isn't that wonderful? You're so close. You don't have to go to Heaven to bring Him down; you don't have to go to Hell to bring Him up. He is here! He is in this place! He is your city of refuge—the strategic nearness of these cities.

Listen, the roads to these cities were always wide. Every obstruction was removed from these cities. If there were a river, there had to be a bridge over the river. The priests and elders would go out and inspect the roads and the bridges to make certain that the way was open. And, they would put signposts there—"Miqlat," which simply meant "This way—refuge!" And, there would be a sign pointing there. It would be so clear; you couldn't miss it. "A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). *Salvation is not so difficult that few can find it; it's so simple that some overlook*

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it. "A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). *"[God hath hidden] these things from the wise and the prudent, and [God has] revealed them unto babes"* (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21).

IV. The Sad Neglect of These Cities

Now, here's the fourth and final thing I want you to see this morning. I've talked to you about the saving nature of the cities. I have talked to you about the significant names of these cities and the strategic nearness of these cities. Think with me about the sad neglect of these cities. Did you know that in spite of the fact that God prepared these cities of refuge, there were some who died needlessly?

There was a man who died needlessly. His name was Abner. The Bible said that he died like a fool (2 Samuel 3:33). I want you to leave Joshua, if you will, and turn with me to 2 Samuel for just a moment—2 Samuel. It's not hard to find. Just fast-forward a little bit, and you'll come to it—2 Samuel chapter 3 and verse 27 (2 Samuel 3:27). You're going to find here the funeral of a man who died when he could have died in the city of refuge. But, he didn't die in the city of refuge. Now, his name was Abner, and Abner was a man that King David loved very much. And, there was a man named Asahel, and Abner had killed Asahel. It was in a battle, and Abner didn't mean to do it. Asahel wouldn't leave him alone. Asahel was chasing Abner. And, Abner—he was running from Asahel, and Abner had a big spear. And, when Abner was an older man, Asahel was a young man. The Bible says he was fleet of foot. (2 Samuel 2:18) And, he's chasing Abner. Abner has his spear, and he's trying to get rid of the young. And, he jabs his spear backward, and the wrong end of the spear actually punctured this man, Asahel, and kills him. It was one of those kinds of deaths that this thing is talking about. And, Abner could have gone to a city of refuge.

Now, David had another man who was a strong and kind of a violent and kind of a macho man. His name was Joab. He was David's general. He was David's commander-in-chief. And, Joab was Asahel's brother, and that meant that Joab was the avenger of blood—to kill Abner. So, Joab was on Abner's trail. Now, finally, Joab does kill Abner, and they're having, now, Abner's funeral. Abner died without going to the city of refuge. And, I want you to see here in 2 Samuel 3, verse 27 what happened. Well, let me just tell it to you, and then we'll read some scripture.

What had happened is this—that as long as David was around, it didn't seem that Joab could really get to Abner. But, Joab really had on his heart that he was going to kill Abner as soon as David was out of the way. And, the three men were there in the city of Hebron. Remember, the name *Hebron* means "fellowship." It was one of the cities of refuge. And, they were there outside the city, and they were talking. And, after they were talking, David said, "Well, I've got to go. I'll see you later." Now, here are Joab and

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Abner. Joab has this hatred burning in his heart for Abner; he wants to kill Abner. But, he doesn't let on that he wants to kill Abner. He just puts a smile on his face, and he says to Abner, "Abner, would you come over here for a moment? I've got something I need to talk with you about." And, Abner foolishly walks right over to the man who wants to kill him. Joab, very quietly, very politely, said, "Just come over here, would you please?" So, Abner walks over. And, when he does, Joab takes out a dagger and puts it under his fifth rib, and Abner dies. And now, they're having his funeral.

Well, look, if you will, in 2 Samuel 3, verse 27: *"And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly"*—do you see that? "Come over here; come over here, Abner"—*"and [he] smote him there under the fifth rib, [and] he died for the blood of Asahel his brother"* (2 Samuel 3:27)—that is, Joab's brother. He died because the avenger of blood killed him. Where did he kill him? Right at the gate of the city of refuge, but on the wrong side of the gate. He could have stepped in the gate and have been safe. But, he's still outside the gate with the avenger of blood. That's the reason, when they had his funeral, that David wept so much. Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 32—go back: *"And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put [in] fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all [of] the people wept again over him"* (2 Samuel 3:32–34). Look in verse 38: *"And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"* (2 Samuel 3:38).

Now, think about it. Here is old Joab; he says to Abner, "Abner, come over here. I want to talk to you." And, he kills him right outside the gate of the city of refuge, and David wept. David said he was so foolish: "What kind of a fool was this man? He wasn't in chains. Joab didn't have to tie him up to kill him. He just walked to his own death right outside the gate." And then, David said, "Don't you know that he was a prince? Don't you know that he was a great man?"

You know, I thought about that. I've known so many great men who are so foolish. I mean, he may be a great businessman; he may be a great entrepreneur; he may be a great surgeon; he may be a great lawyer; he may be a great politician—but he'll die like a fool and go to Hell because he doesn't know the Lord Jesus. It's amazing how men can be so great in some areas and be so foolish and be so stupid. I'm talking to some of you; I'm talking to some of you on television. Mister, you've got maybe 200 people who work for you, but you're going to die and go to Hell because you're going to die on the wrong side of the city of refuge. You're going to die just outside the gate. It's not that you haven't heard the Word. The Word is near you. Why, it's even in your heart; it's the Word of faith that I preach (Romans 10:8). And, you may be a great man. And, you

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know, they had a big funeral for Abner—they'll have a big funeral for you. There'll be a lot of BMWs and Mercedes and maybe a Rolls Royce or two, you know, when you die. And, the man will stand up and say, "Here lies interred a great mover in our community. He did so many philanthropic things. He was such a good man. He'll be missed by all of us." And, one by one, they'll stand up and say a good word about you, and then they'll roll you out. But, your soul will be in Hell before the undertaker knows you're dead. Do you know why? You're on the wrong side of that gate.

And, do you know why Abner died on the wrong side of that gate? Well, you think about it: he was the victim of a deception—that's why. You think about it: Joab said, "Abner, come over here. I need to talk with you." The Bible says he spoke to him quietly (2 Samuel 3:27). He didn't scold him. He said, "Come over here. I want to talk to you." You see, he was a wise man, but he was a victim of a very cunning deception. And, you know what Satan will do to some of you? He will appear to you as your friend—and some of you really think he is your friend. He'll put his arm around you and say, "Come over here. Let's go over here and have a little talk, just you and me"—deceived by the devil. Jesus said he is a liar and a murderer in John chapter 8 and verse 44 (John 8:44).

Conclusion

Now, why did God bring us together today? God brought me here to tell you, if you're not saved, there's a city of refuge: His name is Jesus. And, He is so close to you today—He is so close to you today. The Word is in your mouth and in your heart (Romans 10:8). If you'll just believe with your heart and confess with your mouth, you'll be saved today (Romans 10:9). You'll come into a holy place. You'll come into a helping place. You'll come into a high place, a happy place, a harmonious place, when you come into the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the door, and you're on one side or the other of that door right now.

I want every heard bowed and every eye closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I'd like for you today to pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart. And, I want to help you to pray today, this moment, and ask Christ into your heart. And, if you've never been saved… And, by the way, how many of you can say, "Pastor Rogers, I know beyond the shadow of any doubt that I am saved, that I'm a child of God"? Would you lift up your hand? Hold it up as a word of testimony. All right. Now, take it down. If you could not lift your hand right now, I want you to pray this prayer: "Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. I believe that Jesus Christ is my city of refuge. I believe that Jesus Christ died on that cross for me. I believe He paid my sin debt with His own blood. I believe that God raised Him from the dead. And now, by faith, I believe on Him with my heart. I trust Him, and I will confess Him with my mouth. I'll not be ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. Come into my

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heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus”—pray that; say it and mean it—“Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Father, I pray that many today will say “yes” to Christ. In His holy name. Amen.

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How to Maintain the Life of Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 9, 1994 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 24:11–23

"Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel."
JOSHUA 24:23

Outline

Introduction
I. Careful Reverence
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III. Continual Repentance
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Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Joshua chapter 24—Joshua chapter 24—and what we're going to have when we look at this passage of Scripture is an address by Joshua to the children of Israel. It's his farewell address. He's an old man now, and he is telling them goodbye. But this wily old warrior wants those who have come into the land of Canaan to stay there. He doesn't want them to be evicted. He doesn't want them to forfeit their possessions. And so he's going to give them some final words, words of advice to tell them how to hold on to that which God has given to them. And I hope that you know that these stories are more than Bible history; they're devotional literature. The Bible tells us *"all these things happened unto them for examples"* to us. (1 Corinthians 10:11) And the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, stands for the victorious Christian life. And God's plan for you is not only that you have eternal life—though, thank God for that; God's plan for you is that you have victorious life, abundant life. Jesus said in John chapter 10, verse 10, *"I am come that [you] might have life, and…have it abundantly."* (John 10:10)

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So when you as a Christian are living the abundant life, you have the counterpart to what these people had when they lived in Canaan, the land that flowed with milk and honey. But Satan is a sore loser, and the devil that tried to uproot God's people from the land of Canaan is the one who would try to dissuade you and evict you from the life of victory that you ought to have in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to talk to you about how to maintain the life of victory, how to keep your spiritual life. To lose your wealth is sad; to lose your health is worse; but to lose your walk with God after you've once known Him is pitifully tragic.

Now, what Joshua had to say to these people so long ago in this farewell address fits so clearly with our lives today. Let's begin to read. And he tells them a little bit first of all of what God had done for them. And I'm going to break in, in verse 11, and Joshua says to them, as he rehearses the victories that God has given, *"And you went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the…Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand"*—that is, "It wasn't your victory; it was mine." *"And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat."* (Joshua 24:11–13) Now he's just rehearsing. He's saying, "You're here by my grace and by my strength." "It's not what you did for me," God says, "that brought you here; it's what I did for you."

Now, after Joshua has rehearsed that, he puts a *therefore* in verse 14. Look at it: *"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods."* (Joshua 24:14–16)

There are four things that I want to lay on your heart tonight if you would maintain the life of victory.

I. Careful Reverence

And the very first is this: that you must be careful to practice reverence—careful reverence. Look in verse 14: *"Now therefore fear the LORD"—"fear the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14) That's the first thing he says: *"Fear the LORD."* Do you know how you can lose your walk with God? Get casual. Get careless. Lose the awe. Lose the respect. Lose the fear of the Lord. Over and over and over again in the Bible, we are admonished to

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fear God.

You might want to put these verses in your margin. Psalm 25, verse 14: *"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."* (Psalm 25:14) Do you want God to reveal wonderful things to you? Then fear the Lord. Listen to this verse—Psalm 31 and verse 19: *"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"* (Psalm 31:19) God has laid up good things, but those good things are laid up for those who fear God. Listen to Psalm 33 and verse 18: *"Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy."* (Psalm 33:18) Would you like for God's beneficent, caring eye to be upon you? Would you like for God with His eye to watch over you and guide you, guard you, gladden you, and keep you? Then fear Him. Listen to Psalm 115, verse 13: *"He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great."* (Psalm 115:13) Do you want a blessing? I mean, who is there that does not want a blessing? *"He will bless them that fear the LORD."* (Psalm 115:13) Listen to Psalm 147, verse 11: *"The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him."* (Psalm 147:11)

Do you want to please God? By the way, *if you please God, it doesn't matter whom you displease. And if you displease God, it doesn't matter who you please.* And you cannot please God without fearing God. "Well, pastor, I thought that our religion was based on love, and not fear." Friend, there's no contradiction between love and fear. Those who fear God the most love Him the best. *The fear of God is love on its knees.*

What kind of fear are we talking about? Not superstitious fear. Somebody gave me a book the other day that shows the great churches and cathedrals of the world. It's a beautiful book of photographs. And on some of those cathedrals are hideous creatures posted around the outside of those cathedrals. They're called gargoyles, and they depict demons—demons on the faces of these buildings. You say, "Why would people building a cathedral put demon figures on the face of the building?" Well, they thought if they would put bad demons on the front, maybe it would scare worse demons away. It's superstitious fear.

I look at those things and I think, "They're there to keep the demons on the inside? That's superstition." We're not talking about that kind of fear, and we're not talking about slavish fear. That doesn't mean when you think of God, you cower or your tremble, as if God is a tyrant. Don't ever let the devil get you to thinking negatively about God. God is good. Most people spend their lives running from God because of slavish fear. Not superstitious fear, not slavish fear, but sanctified fear. What is the fear of the Lord? It is reverence; it is awe.

I'm amazed at how many times sometimes preachers, ministers, talk carelessly, flippantly, about the Almighty. And they're taking God's name in vain as surely as if they

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were to curse and swear, because they do not speak God's name with reverence and with awe. He is holy God, and we are to fear Him. When people are about to lose their blessing and be evicted from the land of Canaan, one of these things that causes that is they get careless about their relationship with God. They lose the right kind of fear.

A pilot is not afraid to fly, but he has a great respect for something called the law of gravity. The chairman of our deacons, Jim Glover, an airline pilot, told me one day, "Pastor, there are two kinds of pilots: There are old pilots, and bold pilots; but there are no old, bold pilots." Now, what he meant by that is there are those who just simply take chances, and sooner or later their chances catch up with them. No, it's not that the pilot is afraid to fly, but he has a respect—he has a fear—that is a legitimate fear. What we need, friend, is to fear the Lord.

Now I'm not talking about a negative fear. Do you know the difference between a slave and a son? A slave fears his master's lash, but a son fears his father's displeasure. Now I don't want to break God's heart. I think the best illustration I can give you of the kind of fear that I'm talking about comes from Mark chapter 4. It's when Jesus stilled the waves. Mark chapter 4, verse 37—listen to this: *"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full"*—that is, the water is up to the gunnels. It's about to sink; it's about to swamp. It's about to go under. *"And he"*—Jesus—*"was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow…"*—now, you talk about confidence! Either He was mighty confident or mighty tired—*"asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?"* "How can we sleep? We are sinking!" Now, listen to Him as He rebukes them: *"And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"* And Jesus rebuked that kind of fear. But now, listen to the very next verse: *"And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* (Mark 4:37–41)

He rebuked them for fearing, and in the very next verse, they feared Him in a very wonderful way. One kind of fear was condemned, because it was faithless. The other was exonerated and commended, because it was reverential awe. Listen. Never, never get careless about your Christian life. Never lose the reverence. Have a careful reverence for God.

The late great Vance Havner said something about Gipsy Smith. Gipsy Smith was an evangelist. He was a Gypsy who was saved. He died at the age of eighty-seven. He began to preach as a lad of seventeen. He was original. He was colorful. He said, "I was born in a field. Don't put me in a flowerpot." He was a great man of God. Dr. Havner would have said he was no theologian. He was like another evangelist, Sam Jones. Sam Jones said he liked flowers but not botany. And he liked religion but not theology. And then, Dr. Havner said he was also in a class with Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday said, "I

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don't know any more about theology than a jackrabbit knows about Ping Pong." But he knew Jesus. He told Gipsy Smith, who would also preach and sing, "Gipsy, you need to sing from your diaphragm." "I don't want to sing from my diaphragm; I want to sing from my heart." And he did sing from his heart, and was mightily used of God. And when he died, just before he died, he was so full of vim, vigor, and life, and the reality of Jesus, and they said to him, "Gipsy Smith, what is the secret? How do you keep that life?" He said, "From the day that Jesus saved me, I have never lost the wonder."

The wonder: Don't ever lose it. The fear of the Lord is a part of that wonder. God is so great. And Joshua says, "Don't get put out of this land. Fear the Lord." That's the first thing: careful reverence.

II. Courageous Resolve

Here's the second thing: courageous resolve. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell:"*—but now, listen to this resolve—*"but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15) I mean, that's courageous: "No matter what others do, we will serve the Lord." Look at how you're to serve Him. And, by the way, the word serve literally means "to homage, to worship." It doesn't just mean going around doing things for God; it means to worship Him, to love Him, to bow before Him with all of your heart.

And what is that worship to be?

A. It's to Be Sincere Worship

He says you're to do it with sincerity. Look in verse 14: *"Serve him in sincerity."* (Joshua 24:14) The word *sincere* means "without blemish." It was used of animals for sacrifice that were to be whole and complete, lacking nothing. What does that tell me? I'm to present my body *"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."* (Romans 12:1) It's to be a sincere service. And, friend, I need to continually be giving myself to God.

I gave myself to God as a teenage boy. But he is putting it in the present tense. He's saying, "Now, serve the Lord"—"serve the Lord." When I got saved, I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Jesus. Since I've been saved, I've learned a whole lot more about me, and I've learned a whole lot more about Jesus—and I have to keep on doing that. It's to be a sincere worship.

B. It's to Be Scriptural Worship

It's to be a scriptural worship. Look at it again: *"Serve him in sincerity and in truth"*—*"and in truth."* (Joshua 24:14) Now, sincerity is no substitute for truth, and truth is no substitute for sincerity. *If you worship the Lord in sincerity without truth, you'll be a*

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fanatic. If you worship the Lord in truth and not in sincerity, you'll be a legalist. But if you worship the Lord and serve the Lord in sincerity and truth, you'll be a beautiful Christian.

C. It's to Be Steadfast Worship

A sincere worship. A scriptural worship—I mean, in truth. And steadfast worship. Joshua said, *"We will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15) Do you know what he said? He said, "I don't know what choice you're going to make. I can't force you to make that choice. You can serve other gods if you want to." But then Joshua said something I would that every dad in this congregation would say and mean it: *"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"*—sincere, scriptural, and steadfast service for our Lord.

You know, today we're supposed to get along with everybody and sort of homogenize our beliefs with everybody else. But what is needed today, if you would not be dispossessed from the land of victory, is a conviction, a courageous resolve. And do you know what Joshua was saying? Joshua was saying, "If I have to, I'll just stand alone." The closer we get to the end of the age, the more you're going to have to stand alone. Noah stood alone and was called a bigot and a fool, no doubt. Elijah stood alone before 450 prophets of Baal. You may have to stand alone. Amos stood alone before the king's court.

Now we should never divide over incidentals, but we ought to divide over idolatry. And Joshua said, "If you want to serve those gods, you can go ahead; but I'm going to serve the Lord."

Sometimes denominations have to stand alone. The Southern Baptist Convention has been in a battle over the Word of God, and people have told us we need to enter into the mainstream of theological thought. It all depends on where that stream is going. Denominations sometimes have to stand alone. Sometimes churches have to stand alone when their denomination won't. Sometimes families have to stand alone and leave churches, because the church won't do right. People are good people in bad churches. That's part of the scandal of Christianity. People say, "Well, you know, I can't move: Grandma is buried in the backyard." Well, Grandma would get up and leave if she could—I guarantee it. Sometimes even if the family won't stand, an individual has to stand—and stand alone.

There has to be courageous resolve. If you have a lackadaisical, careless, take-it-or-leave-it type of attitude, the devil is going to boot you right out of your Canaan. Joshua says, "I can't control what you do, but I can control what I will do." Listen to verse 15: *"And if it seem evil [to] you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will*

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serve the LORD."

III. Continual Repentance

Here's the third thing you need to do if you would walk on conquered ground without being evicted. First of all, there needs to be careful reverence. Then, there needs to be courageous resolve. And, thirdly, there needs to be continual repentance. Look, if you will, in verse 14 again: *"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14) "Put away those gods."

Now, this is strange. He's saying, "Put away the gods of Egypt," and they had been out of Egypt for forty years. But, you see, there are always the weeds of the old life that want to sprout again. There are those hangover sins, those residual proclivities, that are down deep in our heart. And we need to be careful of those things, and those old gods will come back in to your life if you're not careful. After you've been in the land of Canaan, those old gods that you worshipped in Egypt or were familiar with in the wilderness, those old gods will come back and demand your service. And you're going to serve someone or some thing, and if you don't serve the true God, you're going to be serving one of those gods. *An idol is anything we love more, fear more, serve more, or trust more than Almighty God.*

What are some ancient gods that Americans serve today? There was an ancient god named Mammon. Do you know who he was? He was a god of wealth. You begin to serve that god, friend, and you'll get evicted from the land of Canaan. There's another ancient god—his name was Bacchus. Do you know who he was? He was a god of pleasure. A lot of American Christians want to serve that god today. He was the god of drunkenness, drugs, debauchery, and pleasure. There was another ancient goddess, Aphrodite or Venus, goddess of sexual lust and promiscuity. You serve that god, or that goddess: you'll be evicted. Another ancient god was the god Mars. These are not all gods of Egypt, but they are ancient gods that Americans today have to deal with. Mars was the god of war, the god of hatred, the god of bloodlust, the god of revenge. Another ancient god was Sophia, the goddess of wisdom, substituting "thus saith the mind of man" for "thus saith the Word of God."

I was reading a book here last week by Steve Farrar, and he talked about the god Baal that the Jews worshipped. He said that Baal had four characteristics—Baal worship. Number one: The worshippers of Baal were pro-choice. They believed in killing babies, only they waited until after the baby was born. But they were pro-choice. They commonly killed their newborn children. He said, secondly, they were environmentalists. They were more concerned about fertility and crops than human beings. Thirdly, the Baal worshippers were a part of a promiscuous lifestyle. They worshipped Baal, their

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god, that way, and homosexuality was at the very core and the very root of it. And, fourthly, they sought to legitimatize Baal worship and make it coexist with the worship of Israel's God. Remind you of anything? We today have old gods that come back with different names, and the names have been changed to protect the guilty. They're old gods with new names.

And if you would walk on conquered ground and maintain your victory, there must be careful reverence, there must be courageous resolve, and there must be continual repentance. You say, "Well, Adrian, I repented when I got saved." So did I. But I've done far more repenting after I've gotten saved than I ever did when I got saved. And so will you, because these old gods will rear their head, and these things sometimes that you think you've done with forty years ago are still there. And be careful that you keep a clean account with God. And how are you to do it? Do it fully, and do it forcefully. He says, "Put away these gods. Don't allow one-half of one sin in your life." "Now, wait a minute: everybody's got a little sin." Don't make peace with any sin. I'm not talking about sinless perfection; I'm talking about a holy ambition to be holy. Deal with sin as sin would deal with you. He says, "Put it away."

You get out there to get on an airplane, and because of hijacking and because of safety reasons, they screen you when you go through that little thing. You know what I'm talking about? You walk through there, and if you're packing a gnat, that thing goes off. And so, if you've got a knife or some weapon, why, that thing buzzes. But even if you don't have a knife or some weapon—you have something like a tie clasp; or, ladies, you have a necklace, or a belt with a big buckle; sometimes I've had to go through that thing five times; I don't wear big buckles and necklaces, I want you to know—I walked through that thing, and it goes off. And I say, "Oh, my keys." So I throw my keys up there, step back and walk, and it goes off again. I say, "Oh, yeah: my calculator." I put that up there. I step back and walk, and it goes off again. I say, "Well, maybe my credit cards," and so forth, go back, and we'll go through again. "Oh, it's my change." I go through again, and finally I get through. Have you ever done that?

You know, I wish I could put one like that at every door here, and if you have any sin in your heart, you can't get out. You've just got to come back in. I mean, you walk through, and you're saying, "Well, *aaaaaaaaa*: come on back in."

So many times, you know, we just think, "Well, God's going to grade on a curve." He's not going to grade on a curve—He's not going to do it. Put them away fully. Put them away forcefully. You treat sin as sin would treat you. You'll get evicted from your land of victory.

"Who is it that knocks so loud?"
"A lonely little sin."
"Slip through," I answered,

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And soon all hell was in.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

IV. Complete Reliance

Here's the fourth thing: If you would maintain your victory, not only must there be that continual repentance, but there must be complete reliance. Now, look in verse 16. Joshua tells them what to do, and the people very glibly say, "Okay, we'll do it. We've got it in our notebook, preacher." Listen to verse 16: *"And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; for the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed: and the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God."* Now, you think ol' Joshua said, "Hey, that is wonderful; boy, I'm so glad that you have decided to do that"? But they didn't fool old Josh: *"And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD:"—"Ye cannot serve the LORD"—"for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the LORD…"*—Joshua read them like a book. He said, "All of that is pious blather, and you're not ready. You're too confident. You're too cocky. You're too careless. You say it, but you don't mean it. And," he says—*"If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good."* Now that the people have been clubbed between the eyes, they come back again: *"And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you,"*—now, watch—*"and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel."* (Joshua 24:16–23)

What is that? Complete reliance—complete reliance! All of these other things that we're supposed to do and ought to do, don't just glibly say, "We will do it," but incline your heart to God. *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Philippians 2:13) People make promises, easy to be uttered and soon to be forgotten, and they make them in the strength of their flesh. Simon Peter, when Jesus spoke of some forsaking Him, big old Simon said, "Why, Lord, I'll go with you to prison and to death." (Luke 22:33) And then he cursed and swore, and denied that he even knew the Lord Jesus. Why? Because it was a boast of the flesh.

You want to maintain your victory? You'd better realize that as you have that reverence and you have that resolve, oh, friend, with it there comes a reliance that says,

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“God, I can’t do it; but, God, you can do it in me, and I’m going to let you.” In the truest sense of the word, *victory is not your responsibility; it is your response to His ability.*

Conclusion

Careful reverence, courageous resolve, continuance repentance, and complete reliance—and you’ll not get evicted from Canaan; you’ll walk in victory. Can you remember those four things? Can you remember them? Reverence, resolve, repentance, and reliance.

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Men Needed

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 19, 1974 **Time: 00AM**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 24:14–15

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
JOSHUA 24:15

Outline

Introduction
- A. Marriage Is Divine in Establishment
- B. Marriage Is Supreme in Relationship
- C. Marriage Is Unconditional in Commitment
- D. Marriage Is Delightful in Consummation

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- A. Not Accepting One's Position Is a Sin against God
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- C. Not Accepting One's Position Is a Sin Against His or Her Welfare

II. The Husband's Provision

III. The Husband's Purity

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, take your Bibles, please, and turn to the book of Joshua—a very familiar text, Joshua chapter 24 and verse 14. Here's Joshua's admonition to the people of God of that day: *"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14–15)

Now you have to appreciate a man like Joshua: *"Choose you this day whom ye will serve…but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* You just have to say, "That's a good man." I appreciate old Joshua. To me he was a man of decision: *"As for me and my house, we will."* He was a man of devotion: *"We will serve the LORD."* He was a man of determination: *"We will serve the LORD."* And we need more fathers of decision, more fathers of devotion, and more fathers of determination.

Now I have decided to speak for several Sunday mornings on the home. Last

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Sunday morning, we spoke on the mother of faith—her name was Jochebed. Next Sunday morning, we're going to speak on the disciplining of children. And another Sunday morning, we're going to be talking about the family and finances. On another Sunday, we're going to be speaking about the subject of purity and what the Bible has to say about the new morality, which is the old immorality under another name. We're going to be speaking on many subjects. We're going to be talking about how teenagers ought to be rightly related to their parents and so forth. And I trust that you will be present for every one of these messages on the home.

Now, this message this morning is entitled "Men Needed." And if there is anything that America needs, in my estimation, America needs men like Joshua of old, who will say, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

Now, the devil hates our homes, and the devil has leveled his fiery darts against our homes. I suggest this is Satan's plan for America: First of all, he wants to dethrone God until He is a mere superstition. Secondly, he would like to debase man until he is a mere animal. Then, he'd like to deny Christian morals that are taught in the Word of God. Then, he would like to destroy the family. Then, he would like to dominate the world. And I believe this is his strategy. And over against Satan's strategy, God has set as a bulwark the home.

Now, the Lord built the home before He built the church. And the Lord built the home before He built the school. And the Lord established the home before He established the government. It is the basic institution.

A. Marriage Is Divine in Establishment

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 19 and verse 6, *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:6) Jesus there was talking about Adam and Eve. But not only Adam and Eve, He was talking about any man and any woman who happen to be married: *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* And in that passage of Scripture Jesus Christ is telling us that marriage is divine in establishment. God established marriage. Marriage is not the product of civilization; marriage is the institution of God. Marriage did not climb up out of the swamp of immorality. The very first man and the very first woman that God created were married by God in a ceremony in the Garden of Eden.

B. Marriage Is Supreme in Relationship

And not only is marriage divine in establishment, but, according to Jesus Christ, marriage is supreme in all relationships: *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife."* (Matthew 19:5) And, mister, may I tell you that your wife is more important than your mother and your father, and your wife is more

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important than your job, and your wife is more important than your own body, and your wife is more important than your church membership. I didn't say the Lord, but your wife is more important than your church membership. It is your supreme earthly relationship—your marriage is your supreme earthly relationship.

C. Marriage Is Unconditional in Commitment

Marriage is divine in establishment. Marriage is supreme in relationship. Marriage is to be unconditional in commitment. Listen to what Jesus said: *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:6) Marriage is a lifetime contract, not a ninety-day option. *"What…God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* Divorce is a sin against God, no ifs, ands, and buts about it—a sin! God said so: *"What…God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."*

D. Marriage Is Delightful in Consummation

Marriage—divine in establishment: God did it. Marriage—supreme in relationship: leave and cleave. Marriage—unconditional in commitment. And marriage—delightful in consummation. There is nothing more joyful, nothing more wonderful, nothing more thrilling than a Christian marriage. I like what Peter Marshall said. Peter Marshall said in one wedding ceremony, "Dearly beloved, the marriage relationship, when rightly understood and properly appreciated, is the most delightful as well as the most sacred and solemn of human relationships. It is the clasping of hands, the blending of lives, and the union of hearts, that two may walk together up the hill of life to meet the dawn, together bearing life's burdens, discharging its duties, sharing its joys and sorrows. But marriage is more than moonlight and roses, much more than the singing of love songs and the whispering of vows of undying affection. In our day, it is by many lightly regarded and by many as lightly discarded, but marriage will ever remain in the sight of God an eternal union made possible only by the gift of love, which God alone can bestow." Isn't that beautiful? And it's so true! It is delightful in consummation. But the secret of a happy marriage is a God-fearing man who will say, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15)

Now, let's talk about the Christian husband. Let me tell you some things that God expects of a Christian husband.

I. The Husband's Position

First of all, I want you to notice the position that God has given the husband. God has set the Christian husband as the head of his home and the head of his wife. Now we're going to use our Bibles a lot this morning, so get them out, lick your fingers, and let's go.

Look, first of all, in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 16. Here's what God said in the dawn of civilization as we know it. God is speaking to the woman: *"Unto the woman he*

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said, I will greatly multiply thy and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;"—now, that's not particularly the part I'm emphasizing, but I read that to get to this part—*"and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."* (Genesis 3:16) Now, notice what God says: "The husband is to rule the home"—*"Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."*

"Well," you say, "Brother Rogers, that was Old Testament. Give me something from the New Testament." I'm glad you asked. Will you turn, please, to Ephesians chapter 5, and let's see what God says in the New Testament, and I want to read beginning in verse 23: *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."* (Ephesians 5:23) All right, the husband is the head of the wife. This is what God's Word says.

Then turn, please, as we continue through the Bible, to 1 Timothy chapter 3, and notice as God is describing what a good pastor should be like. God says there are certain qualifications for a pastor. But we would know that if God would want these qualifications to be in a pastor, really, He would want them to be in any Christian's life, because all a pastor is supposed to be is a real good Christian. First Timothy chapter 3, beginning in verse 4—one of the qualifications for a pastor or a bishop is *"one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"* (1 Timothy 3:4–5)

Now, that tells us two things really: It tells us that what a father is to his home, a pastor is to be to the church. And the Bible tells us that a pastor is to be an authority in his home and he is to be the authority in the church. And it's not because we seek it—that's not the point at all. But the pastor is to have the same relationship to a church that a father has to his home, and the Bible says this is a place of authority. In the Old Testament: *"Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."* In the book of Ephesians: *"The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."* Over here in 1 Timothy, that the pastor is to be *"one that ruleth well his own house."*

Look, if you will, in Colossians now for just a moment, chapter 3 and verse 18, because I want to drive this down hard this morning. There are so many who are clamoring against it, and there are so many who have jettisoned the Word of God particularly at this point, that we need to see it. This is not some incidental scripture that might be misinterpreted, but this is a divine theme. And so in Colossians chapter 3 and verse 18, the Bible says, *"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."* (Colossians 3:18) Therefore, let me say something, mister: That home of yours is to be under your control. And I'm going to say something you may disagree with, but I hope it will cause you to think: If your home is not right, it is most likely

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because you are not right. Most likely it is not the problem of what the children are doing. It is really not what your wife is doing. But if a home is not right, the husband is the very first one to be blamed.

Did you know that God holds a husband accountable for his wife's sin? Did you know that? Let me show you a startling passage, gentlemen. Look in Numbers chapter 30, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 14. It's a rather lengthy passage. You go home and read the whole passage and get the sense of it, but I simply want to make the application now. Now, in Numbers chapter 30, verse 14, the Bible here is speaking about a wife that might make a foolish vow. She might do something that God would not have her do, and the Bible says, *"But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day; then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which are upon her: he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them."* That is, the husband hears the wife doing something that he thinks perhaps she ought not to do. But he doesn't speak up. He doesn't move in. He doesn't take authority. But notice in verse 15: *"But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity."* (Numbers 30:14–15)

Now, notice the scripture: If a wife makes a good intention, or a good promise, and the husband hears this promise or this intention that the wife makes, and then if he stands between her and doing the thing that she ought to do, God says he is going to bear her iniquity. The husband is going to bear the wife's sin. There are some wives who want to tithe and they cannot tithe because their husband is a skinflint. God does not hold that wife accountable; God holds that husband accountable. God holds him accountable, and God says he will bear her iniquity.

Now, you see, a husband is responsible for the whole family. A father is responsible for his son. I want you to look at another passage of Scripture in 1 Samuel chapter 3 and see how God judged a man named Eli, who was a good man, but he failed because his sons were juvenile delinquents. And if you want to see the reason for juvenile delinquency, it's just delinquent parents—that's what it is. And in 1 Samuel chapter 3 and verse 12, God says, *"In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth;"*—now, what is the iniquity that's going to be judged? Well, listen to it—*"because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not"—"his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."* (1 Samuel 3:12–13)

You say, "Well, a father can't make his wife do right; a father cannot make his children do right." The Bible seems to teach otherwise. The Bible seems to teach that if a father is on praying ground, if a father is living right, and if a father is exercising spiritual authority, a father can cause his wife and his children to follow him.

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Notice why God loved Abraham. You know, the Bible says Abraham was a friend of God. (James 2:23) You want one insight into the character of Abraham? Turn to the book of Genesis chapter 18—I think this is marvelous, and I want you to note it—Genesis chapter 18, and I want to read beginning in verse 17. God is taking delight in His servant Abraham, and God says in Genesis chapter 18, beginning in verse 17, *"And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."* (Genesis 18:17–19) Now, God says, "I know Abraham. Abraham is going to command his household. His house is going to do right, because Abraham is going to take charge." Abraham had something of what Joshua had when he said, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15)

Sir, I want to say it again: If your house is wrong, it is most likely that you are wrong. God has said that you are to rule your household, you are to take charge of the household. And just as Mr. Truman used to say, "The buck stops here." It stops with you, daddy. There is where it ends. The man is to take charge of his house. And if your house is wrong, don't you be talking about the environment. Don't you be talking about the schools. Don't you even be talking about a rebellious wife or rebellious children. Somehow, somewhere, there was a time when you married wrong. Somehow, somewhere, there was a time when you raised those children wrong. Somewhere, somehow, there was a time when you quit praying, quit believing God, quit doing what God wanted you to do. For the Bible says you are to be the priest, the pastor, the protector in that particular home. This is your position.

Now, what about a wife who will not agree with that? Because we have a lot of wives today who say, "Well, I'm not going to be in subjection to that thing"—a lot of them! They say, "Well, I'm not inferior to him." And it will be a great day when we learn that subjection does not mean inferiority. Did you hear me? Let me say it again: It will be a great day when we learn that the matter of subjection is not a matter of inferiority.

Now, take your Bible, and watch something very carefully—and you ladies note this now, and you gentlemen—1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 3. We're talking now about the matter of a husband being in charge of his family, and of the wife saying *amen*, and the wife being in subjection. First Corinthians 11, verse 3—now, here's something very clear and very plain: *"I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."* Now, watch. Here's God's chain of command: God the Father, God the Son, the man, the woman. Do you see it? *"I would have you know, that the head of every man is*

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Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." (1 Corinthians 11:3) Now, Paul said, "I want you to know this."

Now, watch: Is Jesus Christ inferior to God the Father? Is He? Of course not! If you know anything about Christianity, you know one of the basic theological tenets of Christendom is the co-equality of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."* (Philippians 2:5–6) Do you see it? In the form of God, equal with God, but yet the Son in subjection to the Father. And when the Son was in subjection to the Father, that did not mean that the Son of God was inferior to the Father; it simply meant this is God's divine order.

And when a wife is in subjection to her husband, God does not mean inferiority at all. As a matter of fact, if you'll do a little thinking, you will know that a woman is infinitely superior to a man—at being a woman! And a man is infinitely superior to a woman—at being a man! And God made us differently, and I can say with the Frenchman, "*Vive la différence!* Long live the difference!" Aren't you glad for the difference? Wouldn't it be monotonous if there were no difference? I'd hate to live in a world where all the girls looked like boys. We may be coming to it. But, you see, a woman who does not want to take her rightful place is making a terrible mistake.

They are talking about equality, equality. My wife doesn't want to be equal with me. She doesn't want to step down for anything. God put womanhood on a pedestal. God put motherhood on a pedestal. God put some fences and some hedges around motherhood and womanhood to protect it and to protect those. And when a woman says, "I will not accept God's plan for the home," she makes a terrible mistake. She commits some grievous sins. And may I point out what they are?

A. Not Accepting One's Position Is a Sin against God

In the first place, she sins against God. Now, notice our text again—1 Corinthians 11:3: *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."* (1 Corinthians 11:3) Look at the chain of command: the Father, the Son, the man, the woman. And when a woman strikes back at her husband, she's really striking back at God. When a woman says, "I will not accept the authority of my husband," she is really in essence saying what? "I don't accept the authority of God, who said he was to be my authority." You see? You're not just sinning against your husband; you're really sinning against your God.

And when you get out from underneath your husband's authority—when you say, "I don't want to do what he wants me to do; no, I'm not going to do it; but now, dear Lord, I want you to answer my prayer, and I want you to give me power to pray for my children"—you're not going to have power to pray for your children, because you're out

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of the will of God. You see, if you want to be over your children, you have to be under your husband. And if you're not willing to be under your husband, you'll never be over your children. This is a biblical principle: that we must stay under in order to be over. If you want authority, stay under authority. What happens in the army when a captain gets out from underneath the orders of a general? When a captain stops being in subjection to those who are over him, he loses authority with those who are under him. It's just a principle. It's in all of life.

Do you remember that man in Luke the seventh chapter who wanted Jesus to heal his son? He was a very important army officer. He says, "Jesus, my son is sick." Jesus said, "Well, I'll go and heal him." And he said, "You don't need to go." He said, "I too am a man under authority. I say to this man, 'Go,' and he goes, and to this man, 'Come,' and he comes." And he said, "All you have to do is say the word, and my son will be healed." And do you know what Jesus said? Jesus said, "I have never seen such great faith." (Luke 7:6–9) Do you know what Jesus found out? This man had discovered a great spiritual principle. He said, "I too am a man under authority." He said, "I have those over me. And since I'm under authority, I say, 'Go,' and this man goes, and I say, 'Come,' and this man comes." And he said, "I have this power because I'm under. I too am a man under authority, so I say, 'Go,' and he goes, and I say, 'Come,' and he comes." And this man looked at Jesus Christ. And I don't know where he learned this lesson, but somewhere he had learned that Jesus was a man in subjection to spiritual authority. He had learned Jesus Christ was under the Father's authority. And he knew that because Jesus was under God the Father, Jesus was over all disease; he knew that. He said, "All you have to do is say the word, and it will be done." Jesus said, in essence, "You've learned a great secret"—"a great secret."

I'm going to tell you moms something; I'm going to tell you ladies something who are listening on television: When you get out of the place that God prepared for you and that God made for you, and when you say, "I don't want God's plan for the home; I don't want my place of subjection," then you lose your spiritual authority. You have to be under in order to be over. It's just one of God's plans. And when a woman is rebelling against her husband, she is really rebelling against God, and she loses the power of God.

B. Not Accepting One's Position Is a Sin against His or Her Very Nature

But, you see, when husbands and wives don't accept their proper position, their proper place, not only do they sin against God, but they sin against their very nature. You see, the Bible says that men are to be masculine, and women are to be feminine. The Bible calls the woman the weaker sex. Now they outlive us by seven years. I don't know why they're weaker. I think that the weakness of the stronger sex is their weakness for the

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weaker sex. But, anyway, the woman is called *"the weaker vessel."* (1 Peter 3:7) And God expects a woman to be feminine, and God expects a man to be masculine.

The Bible is dead set against the idea of *he-women*, and the Bible is dead set against the idea of *she-men*. The Bible says that a man ought to look like a man, and a woman ought to look like a woman. Look at our same passage of Scripture here in 1 Corinthians 11. In verse 3, he's talking about headship. We just read that. And then, go right on down in the same context, because it is closely related. Don't think for one little moment that things like the Equal Rights Amendment and these other things are not tied into a loss of femininity and a loss of masculinity. This idea is an old idea. And notice what Paul says, beginning in verse 14: *"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."* (1 Corinthians 11:14–15)

Now, the point I want you to see is this: that God says there are certain things that you don't have to learn from a textbook. There are certain things that you don't even have to learn from a book of theology. There are certain things that you ought to know by nature. One of them is that a man ought not to look like a woman, and a woman ought not to look like a man. If a man had long hair, the Bible says, "Why, nature teaches you that; basic nature teaches that if a man has long hair, it's a shame to him." (1 Corinthians 11:14) That's not theology, that's just nature. And nature teaches that a woman's long hair is her glory. (1 Corinthians 11:15)

Now we hear a lot of sermons about long hair on men, but we don't hear too many about short hair on women. You see, some of you are going to come to me after the message and you say, "Now, Brother Rogers, I know somebody who wears his hair over his ears: is he sinning?" No, I wouldn't think so. I'd think that's just a hairstyle. You say, "Well, I know a woman who cuts her hair: is she sinning?" Personally, I don't think so, but I'm not about to tell you how long your hair ought to be. I'm not about to have you all pass by me and say, "Yes… no… yes… no…" I'm not going to get myself backed into that corner. My mama didn't raise any fool. But I'm going to tell you one thing, sweet friend—and I believe this with all the function and unction of my soul: When you see a man going down the street, you ought to be able to say, "There goes a man"—"There goes a man." And when you see a woman, you ought to be able to say, "There goes a girl, soft and frilly."

I think that the Bible is dead set against masculinity in women, and femininity in men. And the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 God will judge the effeminate. (1 Corinthians 6:9) The Bible says in the book of Deuteronomy that a woman should not wear that which appertains to a man, and a man should not wear that which appertains to a woman. (Deuteronomy 22:5) There ought to be a difference.

But we're living in a day—do you want me to tell you why so many children are

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getting swallowed up by homosexuality? They have lost the identity: the male image and the female image. They don't really know. We used to have *shes* and *hims*; now we have *shims*. They call it "unisex." The Bible is dead set against it—dead set against it! I'm telling you that God has established an order, and God established it in the Garden of Eden: *"Thy desire shall be to thy husband…he shall rule over thee."* (Genesis 3:16) And the Bible teaches that the husband is to be the head of the wife. And when people get out from underneath this order, not only do they sin against God; they sin against their very nature.

C. Not Accepting One's Position Is a Sin Against His or Her Welfare

And when a woman doesn't want to be in subjection to her husband, and when a husband does not take the authority, they sin against their welfare. These women who are working for what they call "equal rights," I'm going to make a prediction: When they get what they want, they will not want what they get.

Now, you listen to me. I am not talking about equal pay for equal work. I believe in that. That's a valid principle. I'm not talking about certain unalienable rights that belong to people because they're human beings. But let me tell you something, friend: A woman was created for having babies, not fighting wars. God made a difference. And if you can't just look at a person and see the difference, and tell the difference, you're deaf, blind, and dumb. God has made a difference, and you're going to sin against your welfare.

II. The Husband's Provision

And not only that: When people fail to receive God's order for the home, how they sin against the family! You see, the husband is to be the breadwinner. The Bible says, *"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."* (1 Timothy 5:8) God's order is for a man to go out and bring home the bacon—to bring home the bread.

What is God's order for the woman? Look in Titus the second chapter. Now I know a lot of you are going to want to come and argue with me about this, but please don't waste my time and yours, because I want you just to read the Scripture and take it up with God. Just take it up with the Lord now, because if this isn't Scripture, you come and show me, and that will be all right. But here's what God says that a woman is to do. In Titus chapter 2, verses 4 and 5, the Bible says that the older women *"may teach the younger women to be [sober-minded], to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home,"*—now, notice that's what women are to be taught: to be keepers at home—*"good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."* (Titus 2:4–5)

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There's one thing that children need. Now he's talking about younger women. It's one thing when an older woman has raised her children. But young women need to be taught one thing, and that's not to be gadding about; it's to stay home and love those babies—stay home and love those children—to be keepers at home.

The reason the Word of God is blasphemed, the reason we have so much juvenile delinquency, is the working mother who does not stay home with her baby. God expects her at home. And if that's heresy, I'm guilty. And I know a lot of you are not going to like me, and my hat is off to the woman who works because she has to in order to feed her children, to clothe her children. But do you know why many of them are working? They don't want to be cooped up. They want a bigger house, a color television, a different refrigerator, a longer vacation, prettier clothes. In my estimation, they are making a bad bargain.

We have a lot of economic problems in our nation that could be cured. You talk about unemployment and so forth. You talk about pollution. You talk about an energy crisis. You talk about all of these things. If we had women at home preparing home-cooked meals, not driving back and forth to work, there would be plenty of jobs for the men, there would be fewer nervous breakdowns for the women, because they are not suited to get out and cope with that sort of a thing. And no wonder women are taking tranquilizers like salted peanuts! And they are, because they have failed to understand God's plan.

Now, like I say, if I'm wrong, you come and show me where it's not in the Scriptures. But God has a plan, and we're getting away from it, ladies and gentlemen. We'd better get back to it. Now, again, I know there are some of you who have to work, and may God help you, but you ought to say for your goal, "As soon as I can, I'm going to get back in that home with my children where God wants me to be."

III. The Husband's Purity

Well, I had some other things to talk about the husband: not only his position, and not only his provision for his family, but I wanted to talk about his purity and some other things, because God expects as much purity out of a man as he does any woman. Somehow we've gotten a double standard that it's all right for a man to commit adultery, but it's a sin for a woman; that it's all right for a man to curse, but it's a sin for a woman; it's all right for a man to smoke cigarettes, but it's a sin for a woman. God expects as much purity out of any man as He does any woman.

Men ought to be pure. Men ought to represent Jesus Christ to their wives. "As Christ loved the Church, so ought men to love their wives." (Ephesians 5:25) Men ought to represent God the Father to their children. When you teach your children to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven," do you know what you're teaching them? God is like Daddy.

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That's a sobering thought, isn't it? When you teach your children to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven," you're teaching them that God is like Daddy. And any man who sets one standard for his wife and children and another standard for himself is nothing but a garden-variety hypocrite. God wants as much purity from a man as He does any woman.

Conclusion

God, give us some men—tall men, men who will take their stand on the Word of God and say, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15)

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How to Keep Your Spiritual Health

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 29, 1990 **Time: 1800**

Main Scripture Text: Joshua 24:14–22

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord."
JOSHUA 24:14

Outline

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  A. Put Idols Away Forcefully
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Introduction

Open God's Word, please, to the book of Joshua chapter 24, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 14. Now when Jesus came to this earth, He came not only to give you life, but He came to give you abundant life. There are many people who have eternal life, but they don't have abundant life; they're not living in victory. And some who are living now in victory may not be living in victory next week. I want to talk to you tonight on this subject: "How to Keep Your Spiritual Health." We receive a magazine in our home called *Prevention*, and it doesn't necessarily say how to get well. Actually, the title of that book tells you that you're supposed to stay well as much as is possible. And I want to talk to you about how to stay well spiritually.

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Now some of us do get sick physically, and health is a wonderful gift, and not all Christians have health. When the Apostle John wrote to a brother whose name was Gaius, the Apostle John said to this Gaius, *"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."* (3 John 1:2) Now, you think about that. What John was saying to him was, "Brother Gaius, I wish you were as healthy physically as you are spiritually." I wonder how many of you would like for me to pray that for you tonight: "Lord, make her as healthy physically as she is spiritually." Some of you would go home in an ambulance. That's right. And some of you would go out in a casket if you were as healthy physically as you are spiritually. Now you can be very healthy spiritually and not be healthy physically: *"I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."*

Now the passage that I'm about to read to you is after the children of Israel had come into the land of Canaan. Now the land of Canaan is that land which flows with milk and honey, and it was a natural, historical thing. But in Bible typology, as an illustration, it represents the Spirit-filled life. Those of us who've been saved, we've come out of the darkness of Egypt, through the wilderness, into the fullness of Canaan, a land of milk and honey, corn and wine; a land of fullness, of mountains and valleys and hills and rivulets. It is our possession—that wonderful, wonderful spiritual land that we call Canaan. Now Joshua had led the children of Israel into Canaan, and now he's coming to the end of his ministry with them. He's about to die, and he's a wily old warrior. And so he's giving his farewell address, and in his farewell address he is telling them not only how to possess their possessions, but how to preserve their possessions; not only how to claim their Canaan, but how to keep their Canaan.

Now if you want to stay strong spiritually, I want you to listen to what old Joshua had to say to them. I begin reading Joshua 24 and verse 14: *"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell:"*—and then here's that famous, classic statement—*"but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14–15) And then, skip on down to verse 20 and see the warning: *"If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good."* (Joshua 24:20) Just because you've been blessed, that doesn't mean you're always going to be blessed. Just because you're living in the land of milk and honey, that doesn't mean you're always going to be living there. And so Joshua is giving them some very pertinent words.

Now in this scripture that I read to you, there are three commands and one warning.

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I. Don't Lose the Wonder

First of all, I want us to look at the first command, and it is this—look, if you will, in verse 14: *"Now therefore fear the LORD"—"fear the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14) May I tell you, dear friend, if you would keep your spiritual health, don't lose the wonder—don't lose the wonder. What do I mean by that? I mean we need to stand in awe and reverence and amazement always before God. Never let it get old. Never become a casual Christian. *"Fear the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14) You say, "Now, wait a minute, Adrian. I thought that we had a faith that was built on love and not fear." Friend, there's no contradiction between love and fear. *He who fears God the most loves Him the best.* And I've told you before that *the fear of the Lord is but love on its knees.*

Let me give you some verses. Jot them down, and we'll not turn to them. I'll read them for you. Psalm 25 and verse 14: *"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him."* (Psalm 25:14) Would you like to be one of God's insiders? Does God have favorites? No, but He has intimates. Would you like for God to be whispering secrets into your ear? Well, *"the secret of the LORD is with them that fear him."* Listen to Psalm 31 and verse 19: *"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee."* (Psalm 31:19) Do you want some of that great goodness? Do you want what God has got laid up there in the treasure houses of heaven? *"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee."* Psalm 33, verse 18: *"Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him."* (Psalm 33:18) Do you want God's eye to watch over you? Do you want to be able to say, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me"? Then, fear the Lord. Psalm 147 and verse 11: *"The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him."* (Psalm 147:11)

Would you like to please God? Would you like for your life just to be a blessing to God? You've said, "O God, bless me." Would you like to bless Him? "O God, please me." Would you like to please Him? Then fear Him—fear Him. That's what Joshua said to these people. He didn't want them to be cast out of Canaan, so he said, *"Fear the LORD."* Oh, we have a generation of casual Christians. I would say the worst thing about this generation in which we live: in the average populace there is no fear of God.

Now, what do we mean when we say, *"Fear the LORD"*?

A. The Fear of the Lord Is Not a Superstitious Fear

Well, we're not talking about superstitious fear—not Bible fear, superstitious fear. *"God hath not given us the spirit of fear."* (2 Timothy 1:7)

When we were overseas in Germany, we saw some of the old cathedrals, and we went to a magnificent gothic-style cathedral. I believe it was gothic—makes no difference—but on the outside of that cathedral there were grotesque-looking figures out there on the parapet walls—oh, they looked like hideous demons looking down. And I

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said to the guide—I knew what they were, but I wanted to hear him say—I said, "What are those?" She said, "Oh, those are gargoyles." "Why are they there?" "They're to keep the evil spirits out." When I looked at that thing, I thought, "They're probably keeping them in." Dear friend, listen. That's a superstitious fear. Or, it's not to say there are not demons, but some stone-faced monkey is not going to keep them out, dear friend. Let me tell you, that's superstitious fear.

B. The Fear of the Lord Is Not a Slavish Fear

And not a slavish fear. That doesn't mean you're to quake and tremble when you think of God. I fear God, but I'm very comfortable in His presence.

Now an airplane pilot, he doesn't fear the airplane, and he doesn't fear the sky. But as a senior pilot told me, "Pastor, there are old pilots and bold pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots." Now, what did he mean by that? He meant that there is that respect for the laws of aerodynamics.

C. The Fear of the Lord Is a Satisfied Fear

What are we talking about when we say, *"Fear the LORD"*? (Joshua 24:14) We're talking about a satisfied fear. It is the awe, the reverence, the amazement, as we stand in the presence of His burning holiness and we're consumed by His holiness. Or it's not the fear of the Lord that says, "If I don't do right, He's going to get me." That's not the fear I'm talking about. You know the difference between a slave and a son? A slave fears his master's whip; a son fears his father's displeasure. Isn't that true? And a true Christian, it's not because he's afraid God's going to get him if he doesn't behave; he just loves God; he stays in the presence of God. There is that awesome reverence for God.

I go to conventions. I get around preachers and sometimes I hear a bunch of wise-cracking morons. Now I love humor as well as anybody else, but there are some things, dear friend, that we don't need to be uproariously funny about. There are some things that we need to stand in awe of. There are some holy things—some holy things.

Let me illustrate the difference between these two kinds of fear. Turn to Mark chapter 4 for a moment, and you're going to find there the story of Jesus performing a miracle where Jesus stilled the waves. Now, look, if you will, in verse 37: *"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full."* Have you ever been in a boat that was swamped? That's what it means here: the boat is about ready to sink. *"And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow:"*—now, you talk about having inward peace! When you can sleep in the midst of a storm, you have peace like a Savior. And Jesus said, *"My peace I give unto you"* (John 14:27)—*"and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so*

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fearful?"—now, just underscore that—*"how is it that ye have no faith?"* Here was a fear that was a bad fear, an intimidating fear, a fear that Jesus condemned and rebuked them for and said it was a lack of faith, verse 40. And then, look in verse 41: *"And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* (Mark 4:37–41)

Now, friend, there are two fears right there back to back: one, a bad fear; the other, a good fear. Friend, when you fear the Master of the winds and the waves, you don't have to fear anything else. *A man who can kneel before God can stand in the presence of any man.* And so what Joshua is telling these people is just simply this: "Just fear God. Don't lose the wonder."

Dr. Vance Havner—we miss Vance Havner; he's gone to heaven—Vance Havner was telling about Gipsy Smith. There used to be an old-timey, colorful evangelist. His name was Gipsy Smith. He started preaching when he was seventeen. He was still preaching when he was eighty-seven, and died and stepped over into glory. He was an original; he was very colorful. And he said, "I was born in a field. Don't put me in a flowerpot." He was not a theologian, but he was like old Sam Jones, another old-timey evangelist who said he liked flowers, but not botany; he liked religion, but not theology. You know, old Billy Sunday said, "He doesn't know any more about theology than a jackrabbit knows about ping pong." But, dear friend, Sunday knew God. I remember reading about Gipsy Smith. They told him when he was singing—he was a singing evangelist—they said, "Gipsy, sing from your diaphragm." He said, "I'd rather sing from the heart." They asked him when he was an old man, "Gipsy, how have you stayed on the firing line so long? What has been the secret of your power with God?" And do you know what he said? He said, "I have never lost the wonder."

Boy, I love that. I don't want to lose it—I don't want to lose it! God forbid that I become a professional, perfunctory church worker. I want a burning, blazing, passionate, emotional love for the Lord Jesus Christ, don't you?

II. Don't Lack in Worship

And so Joshua is saying to these folks, "Hey, don't take this for granted. Don't settle down. Stand in awe—stand in awe before your great God." That's the first thing: don't lose the wonder. Then, here's a second command. He says, *"Serve him in sincerity."* (Joshua 24:14) First, fear Him. And then, serve Him. When I read that, I wrote down these words: "Don't lack in worship. Don't lose the wonder. Don't lack in worship." Now the word *serve* here literally means "to pay homage." It doesn't mean just to run around doing tasks: that isn't what he means. If that's all He wanted, He could get angels who'd do a better job than we do. But the word here means "to worship, to bow down before, to pay homage to our Lord."

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And notice how we're to worship Him. Notice, dear friend, if you would keep your possessions, if you would preserve your spiritual health, here's what you're to do: You're to worship Him.

A. **A Sincere Worship**

First of all, your worship is to be a sincere worship. Look at it: *"Serve him in sincerity."* (Joshua 24:14) Now the word *sincere* here is the word that was used of animals that were perfect and whole, without blemish; and so the word came to mean "complete." And what Joshua is saying here when he says, "Serve the Lord in sincerity," he is saying worship Him with all that you have; let it be a sincere worship. I don't think there's anything more insulting to God than half-hearted worship—when we're to be worshipping the Lord or to be singing a hymn and your mind is off somewhere else. You see, listen. Someone has said, "It doesn't take much of a man to be a Christian; it just takes all there is of him."

Again, this word *sincerity* means "wholeness, without blemish." *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy"*—which is the New Testament counterpart of this word *sincere*: completely, without blemish, totally—*"[to the Lord]."* (Romans 12:1) Have you done that? Have you done that? Have you given Jesus Christ everything? "Well," you say, "why should I give Him everything?" Because it's already His. First Corinthians chapter 6 and verses 19 and 20: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?… therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

Have you done this? Have you just simply said to the Lord, "Lord, I worship you in sincerity, with all there is of me"? Now I want you to listen to 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 19 and 20. Listen to what it says here. First of all, you must admit His possession of your body: "Lord, I belong to you." Secondly, you must acknowledge His presence in your body: "I belong to you. You live in me." And then, you must accept His purpose for your body: *"therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit."*

Do you see it? Do you understand it? Admit His possession. Acknowledge His presence. Accept His purpose for you. That is worshipping, my friend, in sincerity.

B. **A Scriptural Worship**

Now if you want to keep your spiritual health, let it be a sincere worship. And, secondly, let it be a scriptural worship. Look again to what Joshua said: *"Serve him in sincerity and in…"*—what?—*"and in truth"*—*"and in truth."* (Joshua 24:14) All the sincerity in the world is no good unless you link that sincerity with truth.

Now, dear friend, Jesus said we're to *"worship…in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:24) If you worship in spirit and not in truth, you know what you'll become? A fanatic. And we

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have a lot of churches today, they are having visions and ecstasies and everything else. And they think it's worship, but they're getting further and further away. And someone is standing up and saying, "I have a word from the Lord," and off they go. And they say, "This is a prophecy straight from heaven." You start accepting extra-biblical revelation, and before long, you'll be having anti-biblical revelation. *You worship in spirit and not in truth, you're going to become a fanatic. You worship in truth and not in spirit, and you're going to become a legalist. You worship in spirit and in truth, and you're going to become a powerful Christian.*

Now here's what Joshua said to these people: "You want to stay spiritually healthy? You want to keep the Canaan that you've claimed?" He is saying, "Worship the Lord sincerely, in sincerity, and worship Him scripturally: in truth." (Joshua 24:14) That's what he's saying. Don't, dear friend, lack in worship. You will not stay spiritually strong if you fail to worship.

C. A Steadfast Worship

Not only should it be a sincere worship, and a scriptural worship; it needs to be a steadfast worship. Notice what Joshua said in verse 15: *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD,"*—that is, "to worship the Lord"—*"choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites…but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15)—"We will!" Now, friend, it's not just sentiment tonight; not sitting here and saying *amen*. You need to say, "I will serve the Lord steadfastly in my heart"; resolutely, "I will; I will."

III. Don't Lighten the Warfare

Now here's the third command. I said there were three commands and a warning. The first command was to *"fear the LORD."* Don't lose the wonder. The second command: *"Serve…the LORD."* Don't lack in worship. The third command is *"put away"*; look at it here: *"Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt."* (Joshua 24:14) Now this is a negative command, "to put away," and I wrote down by that, "Don't lighten the warfare." Don't lose the wonder. Don't lack in worship. And don't lighten the warfare.

You see, they had been out of Egypt now for over forty years, and the gods of Egypt, they thought they'd left behind them. But now he's saying to these folks who are already into Canaan—I mean, a whole generation has died in the wilderness, and these are new people; and yet, he is warning them, "You have come out of Egypt, but there are residues of Egypt still in you. Put away those gods of Egypt. The weeds of that old life can sprout again, and those smothered flames that are in your heart can burst up and

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consume your life. And that enemy that you thought was subdued and down in the dust can rise up and smite you." The Bible says, *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Now what he's talking about is old idols. You say, "Brother Rogers, as a Christian, do I have to worry about idols?" Yes. The beloved Apostle John ended his epistle by saying, *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols"*; to Christians: *"keep yourselves from idols."* (1 John 5:21) You say, "We Americans don't have idols." Do you know what an idol is? *An idol is anything you love more than God, anything you fear more than God, and anything you serve more than God.* Anything you trust more than God is a god to you; it is an idol. And there are things that you may have conquered before you were saved and things that you put away, and now those things are gradually creeping back into your life.

I would like to tell you that since I've been a Christian now these many years—saved as a teenage boy—that I don't have to fight anymore. But I tell you I'm still fighting the gods of Egypt. Are you? I still find in my heart and in my life those old weeds that want to sprout again, those old flames that want to burst up again, those old enemies. The devil never gives up anybody or anything without some kind of a fight.

And, my dear friend, everybody is going to serve some kind of god. I was thinking of some of the gods of the ancient world. There's the god Mammon. "Well, we don't serve him anymore." But maybe we do. He was the god of riches. Aristotle Onassis said before he died, "All that matters in this life is money. It's the people with money who are the royalty in our generation." Well, I think Aristotle Onassis would tell you a different story right now. There's the god Bacchus that the ancients used to worship. You say, "Well, we don't worship him anymore, do we?" Well, he's the god of drink; the god of whiskey, of wine; the god of drugs. There was a goddess Aphrodite; she was the goddess of sex. You know she's being worshipped today. There was a god Mars; he was the god of war. He's still being worshipped. There was the god Sophia, the goddess of wisdom, intellectualism. My dear friend, those old gods are still with us—we just give them new names.

And what Joshua said is, "Put away these gods." And then he says—listen—"Choose who you're going to serve." Now, watch it; look at it: *"Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD."* (Joshua 24:14) And then he says in verse 15: *"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."* (Joshua 24:15) Now, look at the word *choose*. The word *choose* means "to take a hard look." It actually has the idea of discrimination: you look at all the gods and say which one is going to be your god.

And, by the way, God challenges you to do this. God just says, "Go ahead and take a look around and see if there's anybody like me." Let me give you some verses.

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Exodus chapter 8 and verse 10: *"And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God"* (Exodus 8:10)—Exodus 8, verse 10. Exodus 15, verse 11: *"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?"* (Exodus 15:11) Isaiah 40:18: *"To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"* (Isaiah 40:18) What Jehovah is saying is, "Bring your best gods. I'll beat them all. It doesn't make any difference."

Dear friend, choose. I've thought about it. I've thought, "If I weren't a Christian, if I didn't know the Lord, whom or what would I serve?" And, friend, I can't even think about it. I'm like old Simon Peter, who said, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou [alone] hast the words of eternal life."* (John 6:68) Oh, friend, let me tell you something: never, never, never lay down your sword; never begin to coast; never think that you're out of the battle. You're not out of the battle. I'll lay down my sword and shield down by the riverside, but until I cross Jordan I'm going to be fighting, friend; I mean, until I step over on the other side. And I fight a battle with sin every day; and so do you.

And how are you to put away these old gods?

A. Put Idols Away Forcefully

Well, first of all, you put them away forcefully. Listen to what he says. He says, "Put them away!" That doesn't mean, "Oh, I wish I were a better Christian. O God, help me with this bad habit I have." Listen. He's not going to help you with any kind of habit until you repent, till you put it away, till you be done with that thing. You get serious with God. Sin has no allurement. Satan has no power. The flesh has no pull that you cannot overcome if you by God's help will say, "I put that thing away." You make a choice. The choice is yours. Do it forcefully.

B. Put Idols Away Fully

And do it fully, or you're going to lose your spiritual health. You say, "Well, I've got a little tuberculosis in me: I'll live with it." Well, listen, friend: You do it fully.

"Who is it knocks so loud?"
"A lonely little sin."
"Slip through," I answered,
and soon all hell was in.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

IV. Do Not Depend on Your Own Strength

Now, what's Joshua telling these folks? "You want to stay healthy? You want to preserve your possessions that you possess?" Then, he says, *"Fear the LORD."* Then, he says, *"Serve…the LORD."* Then, he says, *"Put away those gods of Egypt."* (Joshua 24:14) Then, one last thing: he gives them a warning. Now when the people hear what

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old Joshua says, they just gave a glib answer. Look in verse 16: *"And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;"*—just like some of you tonight are saying, "That's right, preacher! Amen!" And then they say—*"for the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt."* (Joshua 24:16–17) And they recite what God had done for them, and they sounded very pious. But see what Joshua says to this bunch in verse 19: *"And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."* (Joshua 24:19)

"Now, wait a minute, Joshua. Make up your mind. You said, *'Serve…the LORD,'* and then we said we would serve the Lord. Now you're telling us we can't serve the Lord? What kind of a leader is that?" Joshua was giving them a warning. And, my dear friend, even though you fear God, and even though you worship God, and even though you have put away those false gods, let me remind you that he gives this warning: Do not—do not—depend on your own strength, or you're going out of Canaan. He wasn't saying it couldn't be done. He's just saying, "You can't do it, folks. You don't have what it takes. You think in your power and your strength you're going to serve this God? Why, He's a holy God. He hates sin, and He's a jealous God."

That's not an ugly word when it's applied to God, because, dear friend, I don't have a right to be jealous of another preacher. No athlete has a right to be jealous of another athlete, because there are other preachers and there are other athletes. But there's only one God—only one God: *"I the LORD thy God am a jealous God."* (Exodus 20:5) *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* (Exodus 20:3) And Joshua is saying to this bunch, "Don't you make a commitment easily uttered and soon forgotten. God does business with those who mean business." And the people answered now this time differently and soberly—verse 21: *"And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves."* (Joshua 24:21–22)

Conclusion

God has been good to us here at Bellevue Church. We've claimed our Canaan. God has been good to you as a Christian. Many of you are walking in victory. As your pastor and as your friend, don't lose the wonder; don't fail to worship; and don't slacken the warfare.

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