

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#37 Renewing My Commitment

I Cor. 10:11 "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come."

Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

What the people of Israel went through in their actual historical experiences become patterns, or pictures that we can apply to our spiritual battles in our spiritual pilgrimage.

Sadly, not all that were baptized in the Red Sea crossed the Jordan River. When the spies announced a bad report, the nation refused to enter the Promised Land. They only saw the obstacles rather than the power of God. Num. 14:30 God said, "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." For 38 years, they remained in the same station of life, using their weakness, and the strength of the giants as an excuse.

Not much is known about the years in the wilderness, but one verse gives a sobering commentary. Deut. 2:3 Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.

Question: Are you struggling with how to enter a life of victory with Christ, how to move out of the wilderness of doubt, restless wanderings, and mere subsistence into the full blessing of the Spirit-led experience?

Consider: We have spent enough of our lives living in the wilderness, in partial obedience to the Lord. It is time to stop walking in circles, continuing to struggle with the same sins over and over. It is time to face our giants head on, and in the power of the Spirit, overcome the struggles of our flesh.

It took ~20 months to go from Kadesh to the Jordan River across from Jericho. Why?

Israel was smitten with delays:

1. Edom, an enemy, refused direct passage through their land.
2. The Moabites hired Balaam to curse Israel. He instructed them to use their women to seduce the Israelite men. The Israelites mingled with the pagan women and joined in the worship of Baal of Peor. Due to this idolatry, God killed 24,000 Jews.
3. Sihon King of the Amorites refused direct passage and fought Israel.
4. Og King of Bashan fought Israel; and in vengeance Israel destroyed the Midianites.

The land of Canaan is a picture of the Spirit-filled life -- the life that God intended for every Christian to live. NO EXCEPTIONS!

- A. The Spirit-filled life is not just for certain advanced saints but is provided by God for every one of His people.

Joshua 1:2a "Moses [pictures the LAW] my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and ALL this people into the land which I am giving to them..."

- The land is given to ALL the people of Israel, just as the life in Christ is made available to you absolutely without effort on your part.

B. However, although the land has been given to you, it still needs to be possessed.

➤ Title to it is the gift of God; possession of it is the result of an obedient walk.

Joshua 1:3 "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, that I have given to you, as I said to Moses."

➤ Tread = darak = to do warfare or battle, to march

Key Point: You can have every bit of the spiritual life that you want.

➤ "If you are not satisfied with the degree of your real experience of victory, it is because you haven't really wanted any more. You can have all that you want."

C. Our land is described as abundant and extensive; a land in which you find all you need.

Ex. 3:8 "a land flowing with milk and honey."

Josh. 1:4 "From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory."

D. It is a land of both conflict and victory.

Joshua 1:5 "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you."

➤ Every conflict can be a victory. There need not be any defeats!!

E. The secret of dwelling in the land includes both a promise and a presence:
an obedient heart yields an empowering spirit.

Joshua 1:6-7a "Be strong and of good courage; for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous..."

F. No drifting aimlessly along. Walk against the current.

Joshua 1:7b-8 ...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. 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.

Key Point: Our Promise!

1. The written word must be our constant, prescribed meditation and study so we may
"know the truth and the truth shall set us free." [John 8:32]

2. We are promised the accompanying presence of the Holy Spirit.

Joshua 1:9 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.

Key Point: Living the Abundant Life: An obedient heart brings an empowering spirit.

G. The enemy is a defeated foe! Joshua 2

➤ For 40 years, the hearts of the people in Jericho were melted.
Israel could have gone in at any time and taken the land.

➤ How long have I been waiting to enter the spirit-filled life and take a defeated foe?

God brought them to the east side of the Jordan when it was at flood stage. The Jordan River is a picture of my death with Christ. All that I am in Adam comes to an end: my reliance on myself; my desire to live my own life, make my own decisions and set my own goals.

- You will discover you cannot have His life lived in you with your agenda.
- If you want to live by your agenda, you have only your fallen Adamic life to live it.
- If you want Christ's life, then you must yield to His vision and purpose for you.

Key Point: The faith that got you out of Egypt is the same faith that gets you into the land.

Col. 2:6 Paul writes: "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

When they stepped out by faith, God parted the waters and they passed through on dry ground to the entrance of their Promised Land.

Moving In To Take Possession Of This Land, they saw the tremendous city of Jericho with its huge walls. God never begins His conquest with the outward problem.

He begins with me; I am the first problem.

A. Three Preparations Before Engaging In Battle:

1. A new generation had grown up uncircumcised. The first act was circumcision which is a picture of a surrendered heart -- a heart in which the reliance on the flesh has been put aside, cut off -- a circumcised heart. [Romans 2:29]
2. Celebrate Passover for the first time since Mt. Sinai. Remember the night when the death angel of the Lord passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt because they were protected by the blood of the lamb. It pictures a thankful heart that looks back to that day of deliverance when Christ became our Passover sacrifice for us.
3. "Are you for us or for the enemy?" The man said, "No; but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." [Joshua 5:14] "I have come to take over."

Key: It isn't your job to plan the strategy of any battle. It is the Lord's job and battle.

B. Three Major Obstacles To Overcome Before The Land Is Won.

These picture 3 types of problems which confront us as we traverse the Christian life.

1. Jericho -- with walls about 300 feet thick and 60 feet high -- an immense fortress, and OUTWARD challenge, a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. [Type of the World]

"I have given the city of Jericho into your hands." Here is the plan:

- Have the people march around the city once a day for six days.
 - Day 7: March around 7 times.
 - Blow a long blast on the ram's horn; sound of trumpets; all people shout and the walls would fall down flat! That was it!
 - Walk around it, displaying the ark of God, the presence of God, while shouting and playing the trumpets as a display of triumph -- the walls fall down.
 - It isn't the visible obstacle that is the problem, but our attitude toward it.
2. The second obstacle in their path is the little city of Ai which is wrapped up in the sin of Achan who coveted something that was forbidden. He took it and hid it.
 - When they went up against Ai, Israel was utterly defeated.

- Joshua fell upon his face before the Lord and said, "What is the reason for this?" [Joshua. 7:7] God said to him, "Joshua, get up off your face. Don't pray to me now.
- There is sin in the camp. Go search it out." Finally, after searching through all the ranks of Israel, they filtered down to Achan and his family and Achan confessed.

Key Point: Ai is a beautiful picture for us of those inward problems arising out of our own lusts for that which God says we cannot and must not have. We have no power to stand.

We experience failure and defeat, as Israel did. After this sin was confessed, God gave them victory over Ai. They gained victory over the problem of the FLESH and its desires.

3. The battles of Gibeon and Beth-horon illustrate the special ATTACKS OF SATAN on us.
 - a. Gibeon is the story of deception. Satan comes as an "angel of light."
 - The Gibeonites dressed themselves up in old clothes, took old moldy bread and tattered wine skins, and rode emaciated donkeys out to meet Joshua. [Joshua. 9:3 ff]
 - When Joshua met them, he said, "Where are you from?" "Oh," they said, "we are from a country far away. We have heard of the mighty prowess of Israel and we have come over to make a treaty with you."
 - Joshua said, "How do I know that you are what you claim to be?"
 - They said, "Well, look. Look at our provisions. We took this bread fresh from the oven just when we left and look how moldy and dry it is.
 - Our clothes are ragged and tattered. Our donkeys are worn out from the distance.
 - Joshua believed them and made a pact with them. He did not consult the Lord. [9:8-15]
 - After they had signed the treaty, Israel discovered they were neighbors. [25 miles]
 - They had been trapped and deceived by an angel of light -- by a Satanic deception which appeared to be right, and good, and trustworthy, but was not. They had to stick by their treaty and spare the Gibeonites.
 - b. Beth-horon: All the kings of the Canaanites banded together and came roaring down in a tremendous league of nations against Joshua. Although Israel was greatly outnumbered, God gave the victory!

God caused the sun to stand still, thus making the day of battle to last until victory came -- the long day of Joshua.

- This pictures the devil coming as a roaring lion in an overwhelming catastrophe that seems to shatter us, to shake our faith, and make us cry out, "God, what is happening to me? Why should this happen to me? We seem to be swept off our feet by this terrible, staggering thing.
- But Joshua stood fast in faith, depending upon God to simply work a miracle.

Eph. 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

After the victories at Jericho and Ai, Israel journeyed to Shechem, a valley between Mount Ebal, the mount of cursing, and Mount Gerizim, the mount of blessing, where Joshua would read the book of the Law of Moses. Why to Shechem?

Moses had commanded this in his farewell speech. [Deut. 27:1-8]

Joshua 8:30-35 God had commanded them to go to Shechem after they entered the land and conquered the initial area. Before these 2 mountains, they are to renew their vows to God.

1. After they arrive at Mount Ebal, Joshua was to build an altar there for burnt and peace offerings to the Lord to atone for their sins and to thank God for his blessings.

➤ Only a sacrifice of blood can save the sinner from the curse of the law. [Gal. 3:10-14]

Deut. 27:4 Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster.

2. The words were to be written clearly for the people to read. [27:8]

Deut. 27:5-7 And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them. ⁶ Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole [uncut] stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God: And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God.

- No human work was to be associated with the sacrifice lest people think their own works can save them. [Eph. 2:8-9]
- God asked for a simple, stone offering, not one designed and decorated by human hands, "that no flesh should glory in His presence." [I Cor. 1:29]
- It is not the beauty of manmade religion that gives the sinner forgiveness, but the blood on the altar. [Lev. 17:11]
- Burnt offerings = total dedication to God
- Peace offerings = joyful celebration of God's blessing

Key: By these sacrifices, they were assuring God of their commitment to Him and their fellowship with Him.

3. The 12 tribes were divided into 2 groups. [Deut. 27:12-13]

➤ Mt. Ebal = Hear God's curses for disobedience

- ❖ Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan & Naphtali
- ❖ Sons of Bilhah & Zipah = slave women of Jacob's 2 lawful wives
- ❖ Reuben = exception = He was one of Leah's legitimate sons, but he was cursed because he had sexual relations with Bilhah, his father's concubine.

➤ Mt. Gerizim = Hear God's blessings for obedience

- ❖ Sons of Leah & Rachel = Jacob's lawful wives [Gen. 35:23-26]
- ❖ Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin

Key: As the spiritual leaders read the curses, they weren't predicting what would happen if they disobeyed God. They were calling upon the Lord to send these curses on His people if they turned away from Him. When the people responded, "Amen," after each statement, they were telling God they were willing to be chastened if they disobeyed Him.

Amen = I accept the terms of the covenant.

JOSHUA'S FINAL CHALLENGE AT SHECHEM: Joshua 24

In his farewell to his people, an aged Joshua gathered the whole nation to Shechem and reminded them of their previous pledge and begged them to follow God.

He brought them back to the very spot where God had warned them to obey or be chastened.

1. It was here Moses, many years earlier, had told them, This day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God. . . . These shall stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people,... and these shall stand upon Mount Ebal to curse [Deut. 27:9, 12-13).
2. He took Israel back to its roots, physically and historically, in a powerful object lesson to reinforce their ties to generations past and all God had done.
3. He reminded them of God's promises and how He had fulfilled those promises and delivered them from diversities.
4. Joshua then challenged the people to say whom they would serve and they promised to serve God [Joshua 24:14-20].
5. The renewal ceremony between the Israelites and God recognized the promises God made to Abraham [Gen. 12:7; 17:7, 8], Jacob, and the people at Sinai through Moses [Ex 24:8].
6. He chose Shechem, "a place which was sanctified as no other for such a purpose as this by the most sacred reminiscences from the times of the patriarchs."
7. He set up another stone in Shechem and said: "Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, lest you deny your God." [Josh. 24:27]
8. God gave you a land for which you did not labor and cities you did not build. You are dwelling safely in the Promised Land, eating of the vineyards and olive groves.
God's miraculous deliverance was followed by His abundant grace.

Joshua 24:14-15 "Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Consider: We would never dream of worshipping a golden calf. But we may be tempted to worship our favorite sport, our career, our children or even our ministry.

Truth: More often than not the idols in our lives is self.

I Sam. 15:23 The Bible says that stubbornness is as idolatry.

Stubbornness is putting our self-will before God's will. Now is the time for our self-will to decrease so that His will can increase in the earth. Now is the time for us to lay aside childish ways and adopt His ways for His glory. Now is the time for us to surrender with *all* our heart, with *all* our soul, with *all* our strength, and with *all* our mind to the will of God— even at the expense of our personal ambitions, hopes and plans. It's time to lay everything on the altar and let the Lord give back only that which agrees with His plans and purposes.

Choose this day whom you will serve: self or the LORD.

Col. 1:9-10 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be Filled With The Knowledge Of His Will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ That ye might Walk Worthy Of The Lord unto all pleasing, being Fruitful In Every Good Work, and Increasing In The Knowledge Of God.