

MINI BIBLE COLLEGE



**Leviticus,
Numbers, Deuteronomy
And Joshua**

Study Booklet #2

The Book of Leviticus

Chapter 1

A Minister's Manual

Many people who read the Bible consider Leviticus to be a very difficult book. They find it to be boring reading after all the specifications for the tabernacle in the wilderness in the last third of the Book of Exodus. When they come to the Book of Leviticus, they lose their resolve to read through the Bible.

The word "Leviticus" literally means, "pertaining to the Levites." The Levites were the Hebrew priests. In order to understand the Book of Leviticus, it is absolutely essential that you understand that little "tabernacle in the wilderness," where these priests were in charge of the presentation of sacrifices, offerings and other liturgies. Later on, Solomon's temple, which was very elaborate, was built on the same pattern as the original tent of worship Moses was commanded to erect in the wilderness.

One of the most significant things about the little tent of worship was that it was to be placed at the center of the camp as the twelve tribes of Israel crossed and circled the wilderness for forty years. The fact that the tent of worship was to be put at the center of the camp illustrates something. The first commandment, said God, is supposed to be first. The Scriptures teach us that God is to be central, at the center of all of our lives. That is demonstrated, or illustrated, by the fact that the little tent of worship was at the center of their camp.

Perhaps the most important observation we can make about that tent of worship is the fact that God literally, actually, dwelt in that little tent. We are told that when Moses finished constructing that tent of worship, the presence and the glory of

God came and filled the inner compartment of the tent that was known as the Holy of Holies, symbolizing the way the Holy Spirit fills believers today.

As the Israelites traveled through the wilderness, the cloud that hovered above the tent guided them. When the cloud moved, they moved. When the cloud stopped, they stopped. In this way, the cloud led them. The people could approach the tent for forgiveness, for worship, and for direction.

The Tent's Construction

Now that we understand the purpose of the tent, let us take a closer look at its construction. This worship tent had a fence around it, made of a material that resembled canvas. The area within the fence that surrounded the covered tent was called the courtyard. Later on, the courtyard in Solomon's temple would be quite large (over 5.5 hectares). But the courtyard was not large in this first tent of worship.

There were some articles of furniture in the tent of worship that were very significant. It is important to note that all of the articles of furniture had handles on them. This was necessary because they all had to be carried through the desert wandering.

The first article of furniture in the courtyard, soon inside the gate, was called the brazen altar. This altar resembled a large charcoal grill. A fire was kept burning under the brazen altar all the time. When a sinner came to the tent seeking the forgiveness of sin, he would be met at the gate to the courtyard by a priest. Then the animal he brought with him would be slaughtered according to the description given in Leviticus. Afterward, the animal would be placed by the priest on the brazen altar. The sinner stayed at the gate of the courtyard. He never moved into the covered part of the tent of worship. The priest entered that part of the tent in his place. Once the priest

placed the animal sacrifice on the brazen altar, while the smoke of the sacrifice was rising up to God, the priest proceeded to the next article of furniture in the courtyard, which was called the laver. It was like a large birdbath. That was where the priest would ceremoniously cleanse himself on behalf of the sinner, who remained at the gate of the courtyard.

The tabernacle, or the tent proper that was covered, was divided into two compartments. The outer compartment was called the Holy Place. There was a very thick veil dividing this Holy Place from the inner compartment, which was called the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was where God dwelt. This veil was made of very strong material. Josephus tells us that several teams of horses pulling in opposite directions could not have torn it. The one in Solomon's Temple, which was the one still in use in Jesus' time, was so large it resembled a large theater curtain.

We are told in the Gospels that at the very moment Jesus died on the cross, that veil, which was between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, was torn from the top to the bottom (see Mark 15:38). That is one of the great miracles of the Bible, and it is one that often goes unnoticed.

There were four articles of furniture in the tent of worship. Having ceremonially cleansed himself in the courtyard at the laver, the priest went into the first part of the covered tent, or the Holy Place.

On his left was the candlestick. This candlestick was very significant. It represented the Revelation that God had given the people of God when He gave them the Word of God – and, of course, this revelation showed them how to approach God. So the priest would worship before the candlestick and thank God for the revelation He had given the people of God and that sinner who was still out there at the gate of the courtyard.

On the right, there was the table of shewbread. Its purpose was to remind the priest of what the manna symbolized, that God gives us each day our daily bread.

Straight ahead, right up against the veil that blocked the way into the Holy of Holies, was the altar of incense. At the altar of incense, the priest would stand and pray a prayer of intercession for the sinner who still remained outside. The priest would go this far, and then he would return and meet another sinner and go through the same procedure again.

Once a year, all the people would assemble around the tent of worship. On this occasion, the high priest would go through the veil into the Holy of Holies and offer a blood sacrifice for the sins of all the people.

As we look at this little tent of worship, we need to realize that every article of furniture in it presented an allegorical picture of Jesus Christ. That being so, let us look more closely at each one of them individually.

The Tent's Furniture

The brazen altar really preaches the Gospel of the New Testament. All the animals were sacrificed on the brazen altar, and all of the animal sacrifices were fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross. This brazen altar says to us, "You cannot approach a holy God without a sacrifice. 'Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin'" (see Hebrews 9:22).

The article which is called the laver, where the priest ceremoniously cleansed himself before he entered the Holy Place, is saying to us what the Scriptures say in so many places: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Even he that has clean hands and a pure heart" (Psalm 24:4).

Fellowship with God is the ultimate objective in the tent of worship. Everything moves in that direction. And in the Bible,

fellowship with God is often likened to a meal. The laver is saying to us what our mother used to say to us when we were kids, "Wash your hands before you come to the supper table." Wash up before you come to dinner, before you come to have fellowship with God. You have to be washed; you have to be cleansed. That was the message of the laver.

As the priest stood before the golden candlestick, he was acknowledging that God was the source of this Book we are studying in this survey of the Bible. He was acknowledging that God's Word is our guiding light. He was worshiping and thanking God for giving that sinner out there at the gate a revelation of how he could be saved and approach a Holy God in worship.

As I observed above, the bread on the table of shewbread symbolized the fact that God would sustain His people and provide for their needs. Obviously, God never wants us to lose sight of the fact that He is the source of our sustenance. He wants us to trust Him and look to Him for every need we have - physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

Next, let us look at the altar of incense. As the priest stood before this altar, he would pray for the sinner who was outside at the gate of the courtyard. As he did so, he was a picture of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who intercedes for us before the Father.

In Summary

Everything in that tent of worship was all about Jesus. He is the Light of the World, He is the Bread of Life, He is our perfect sacrifice. He is the One Who comes and cleanses us at the laver. It is really the Gospel of Jesus Christ that you see in that little tent of worship. It is only as you understand the tent of worship that you can hope to understand the Book of Leviticus, because Leviticus was the manual that the priest used

as he officiated in the tent of worship. Do you know this Jesus Who is depicted in this holy little tent?

Chapter 2

The Tabernacle Today

In the Book of Genesis, we read that when man commits sin the worst consequence is a divorce – a separation – between God and man. The solution to this fundamental problem, the reconciliation of that divorce, is really what the Bible is all about – and that is what this tabernacle in the wilderness was all about.

So why is it we do not make animal sacrifices today? It is because God's requirements have changed. When we get to the Book of Hebrews we will have more to say about this. But, in summary, Hebrews 9 says that this tent of worship was only a symbol of another tabernacle that exists in the heavenly dimension. This heavenly tabernacle is not made of physical materials. The materials are all heavenly, spiritual materials. The tabernacle that God told Moses to build is simply a visible, tangible expression on earth of the spiritual intangibles in the tabernacle described in Hebrews 9.

Remember, when Jesus died on the cross, the veil in Solomon's Temple tore from top to bottom. Now keep in mind, also, that once a year the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies, and he would take blood to cover the sins of all the people. In the same sense, when Jesus died on the cross He became the Great High Priest and, in heaven, He moved through the worship pattern of the heavenly tabernacle. At the brazen altar, in the heavenly tabernacle, he offered His death as the final

fulfillment of all those animal sacrifices. He went to the laver, and He made permanent cleansing possible.

Before Christ's death, the sinner could not approach God. Only the priest could approach God and intercede for the sinner. But all that was done away with when Jesus Christ died on the cross. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He made it possible for you and me to go right into the presence of God.

Another important implication is that our bodies are now the temples of God. In essence, Paul wrote: "Do you not realize that God's Spirit lives in you? Anyone that defiles His temple, God will destroy, because His temple is holy and that is exactly what you are." The Apostle Paul tried to get this truth across to the Corinthians, who were hung up in sexual sins. He said to them, "Your body was not made for sex; your body was made for God. Do you not realize your body is the temple of God, and God lives in you?" (I Corinthians 6:15-20) In Colossians 1:27, he tells us: "There are those to whom God has planned to give a vision full of the splendor of His secret plan for the nations. His secret is simply this: that Christ in you is your only hope. Yes, Christ in you brings the hope of all glorious things to come."

Christ in you is a miracle. It means that the presence of God lives in you; and it also means that you have all you need to live the way God has called you to live.

Now let us think about this beautiful imagery regarding the tent of worship in our own lives. When you get up in the morning, I highly recommend that you have a quiet time, a time of worship, a time in God's presence before you go out into the world and live your life that day. When you do, try to think your way through this tent of worship. Imagine yourself moving up to the brazen altar and then trust the Good News that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God dying on the cross for your sins. If you have never trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, do this

now. And then, thank God for your forgiveness at the cross of Jesus, and affirm your conviction that He was the perfect sacrifice for your sins.

Now imagine yourself moving on to the laver, where you need to get your hands and feet washed, where you need that continuous cleansing. Are there things in your life that are dirty, and not pleasing to God? Confess these to God; turn away from these and be cleansed. Then, figuratively speaking, go into the Holy Place and stand before the candlestick. Thank God for revelation; thank God that He did not leave you in the dark about life and salvation. Thank God for the Word of God.

Then picture yourself standing before the table of shewbread, and thank Him for providing all your needs. Acknowledge Him as the source of every piece of bread and every possession you have, and every way that your needs are met. Acknowledge Him as the One Who is meeting those needs, and acknowledge that with gratitude.

Then, as you think of the altar of incense, think of the miracle of prayer. And take time to pray about every detail of your needs and the challenges you are facing that day.

Then, as you think of the Holy of Holies, let that challenge you to remember that there is such a thing as the Divine Presence of God. Remember that God's Spirit is in us and that we can be in the very presence of God wherever we are. We do not need a priest to go into the presence of God for us. We do not have to go through a literal worship structure like the tent of worship because when Christ died on the cross, He made it possible for us to go directly into the presence of God.

There are many devotional applications to this tabernacle in the wilderness. This is the most important one: It is still possible for a sinful man or woman to approach our Holy God and actually come into His very presence through a new and living way

which was made possible through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When we appreciate what God had to do to make this possible, you would think people would be stampeding into His presence. Why is that not the case? Have you ever come into the presence of your Holy God? Jesus claimed, "I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one can come to God the Father but by me" (John 14:6). We see this great Gospel verse pictured in the tent of worship. God wants to meet with you and to make your life His tabernacle.

Chapter 3

The Sense of the Sacrifices

Now that we have some perspective on the tent of worship, we are ready to study this little Book of Leviticus. This book is really, very simply, a handbook for the priests. It is a manual that gives detailed instructions about things - what animal to slaughter, how to kill it, and even what to do with the entrails. That may not be as inspiring as Psalm 23 or 1 Corinthians 13, but please do not feel there are no spiritual truths or devotional applications you can gain from the Book of Leviticus. This book has beautiful truths in it and I would like to point you to some of the garden spots in the book.

The Sections

You need to understand that this priest's manual is divided into several sections. The first seven chapters of the book focus on the sacrifices. It tells the priests exactly what to do as they prepare these sacrifices, but it also gives insight into the meaning of these sacrifices.

In chapters eight through ten the focus is upon the servants, or upon the priests themselves. The instructions in this section profile the men the priests were supposed to be and the standards the priests were supposed to keep. By application, there are many beautiful devotional truths in these chapters.

The heart of the book is found in chapters 11 through 22. I call this section of the book the "sanctification." The tent of worship and the priests who officiated there were God's statement to the whole world that the chosen people of God were a holy people because their God was holy. The emphasis in these chapters is that these people were chosen to be different. The word "holy" means "that which belongs to God." These priests were to live like people who obviously belonged to God.

In chapters 23 to 25 you have what I call the "services." There are many holy days in the Jewish faith, and you will find them documented in the first five books of the Bible. Since these priests were the ones who were to officiate during these holy days and these very sacred ceremonies, they needed instruction regarding how to do so.

When you come to this section of Leviticus, ask yourself this question: What was it God wanted the priests to remember when God instituted a holy day, like Passover? Then ask yourself this question: Why did God want the priests to remember these things?

The Applications

I call the last two chapters of the Book of Leviticus the "surrender." The Book of Leviticus, the Book of Deuteronomy, and the Book of Joshua close with strong sermons of application. They all conclude with a tremendous exhortation to the people of God to obey the laws of God and be the holy people they had been called to be. They had been delivered and they had been saved to

be holy. The exhortations at the end of the Book of Leviticus make these last chapters of this book very dynamic. Moses said he had a speech impediment, that he could not articulate very well, but here he appears to have been very eloquent.

Devotional, Personal and Practical Applications

Now let us look for some of the devotional blessings you can find in Leviticus. We will start in the first section, the "sacrifices." The first seven chapters of the book contain some beautiful truths regarding the way the priests were instructed to offer sacrifices to God. For example, when a sinner came down to the tent of worship and he wanted to receive forgiveness, he was met at the gate by a priest. That priest would instruct him in the meaning of the sacrifice the sinner was about to offer.

In addition to their other responsibilities, the priests were the teachers of the people of God. As the sinner offered the sacrifice, the priest instructed him to put his hand upon the head of the animal. When the sinner did that, the animal became his substitute. All the sin of the sinner was transferred to the head of that animal. The death the sinner deserved because of his sin was suffered by the animal and not by the sinner. This is where we get the term "scapegoat." That was the significance of that sacrifice. Theologians call this practice the "substitutionary atonement" when they apply this beautiful symbolism to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins.

Also, as you read this book, you will discover that there were times when the entire nation had sinned and there had to be a national repentance. When they realized what they had done, they were to offer a young bull for a sin offering. They were to bring it to the tabernacle, where the leaders of the nation would lay their hands upon the animal's head and then kill it before the Lord. Then they would follow the same procedure as they

would for a regular sin offering. In this way, the priests were making atonement for the whole nation. Would that not be a wonderful thing to experience as a nation today? National repentance for national sin would be a wonderful event in any nation. This event is prescribed in the Book of Leviticus.

These priests were to be anointed men; that is, they were to be men who were led and controlled by the Holy Spirit. To illustrate that, the blood of the sacrifice was placed on the ears and the hands and the big toe of the right foot of the priests. This was saying to the priest, "You are to be a holy man. You are to lead the people to be holy. Everything you hear, everything you touch or do with your hand, and every place you go should be anointed and controlled by the Holy Spirit."

In the Book of Leviticus, you will also find a beautiful illustration of what we mean when we say that Moses wrote of Jesus when Moses wrote the Law Books. In the New Testament, when Jesus healed a leper, He always said to the leper who had been healed, "Go and show yourself to the priests." Why did He do that? Because, in the Book of Leviticus, you find that the priests were given that instruction.

When you read the last chapters of the Book of Leviticus, you will find much devotional content in the magnificent preaching of Moses. For instance, he quotes God as saying, "If you obey all of My commandments, I will give you rain, abundant crops, trees laden with fruit, grapes that will still be ripening when the sowing time comes again. You shall eat your fill and live safely in the land and I will give you peace and you will go to sleep without fear. You will chase your enemies and they will die beneath your sword. Five of you will chase a hundred and a hundred of you ten thousand. You will defeat all of your enemies. I will walk among you and be your God and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 26:12).

You will also discover in the Book of Leviticus that certain things are forbidden, like homosexuality. Homosexuality does not fit into God's plan to have persons becoming partners and parents who produce persons who become partners and parents. Homosexuality is forbidden because the banquet of consequences is not good. Moses is very direct. He condemns homosexuality very, very strongly. In the Book of Leviticus, Moses also condemns sorcery, witchcraft, fortune telling, and many other things. The laws of Moses are severe because the Jewish people were to be a holy people. Holiness is the end result God desires to teach His people in the Book of Leviticus.

I hope this introduction and overview of the Book of Leviticus will make it possible for you to read Leviticus for yourself and be greatly blessed when you do. Remember, the Book of Leviticus was a manual for the priests that showed them how to be anointed, holy men of God who could teach the people of God how to be holy. "Be holy, for I am holy, says the Lord" - that is the message of the Book of Leviticus to you and me.

The Book of Numbers

Chapter Four

The Level of Decision

The Book of Numbers continues a storyline that began in Genesis, weaved its way through Exodus, and was briefly interrupted when God gave Moses a book of plans and specifications for building the tabernacle in the wilderness.

When the children of Israel were miraculously delivered from their bondage in Egypt, they were to cross a wilderness and enter the promised land of Canaan. Numbers tells us that they did not go directly from Egypt into Canaan. They went around in circles in that wilderness for forty years!

Figuratively speaking, many believers today do the same thing. They have been delivered from the penalty of their sins by the blood of Christ, yet they do not live the way God created, and recreated them to live. They are depressed, bored, dissatisfied, and unfulfilled. They have not entered the "Promised Land" of that quality of life the New Testament calls "eternal life" (John 3:15). Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The New Testament calls this quality of life, "eternal life."

The promised land of Canaan is an allegorical picture of this New Testament quality of life the believer is saved to experience. Instead, believers often go around in circles of unbelief, disillusionment, and confusion. The Book of Numbers teaches us that lesson allegorically as it records this chapter in the history of the Hebrew people.

The Death of a Generation

This book gets its name from the fact that the Hebrew people were numbered twice. There was a census taken in the first three chapters of the book and another taken in chapter twenty-six. Between the first and second census you see the death of a whole generation.

Because of their lack of faith, God said to the Israelites: "You will die in this wilderness. Not a single one of you above the age of twenty years, who have complained against Me, shall enter the Promised Land. Only Caleb and Joshua are permitted to enter it. You said that your children would become slaves of the people of that land. Instead, I will bring them safely into that land and they shall inherit what you have despised. But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and you will wander in this desert for forty years. In this way you will pay for your faithlessness until the last of you lies dead in the desert. I will teach you what it means to reject Me. Every one of you shall die here in this wilderness" (Numbers 14:34-36).

As the Israelites wandered through the wilderness, God tried time and again to prove to them that He was with them. To give them a foundation for their faith, He performed miracles for them. In this way, He tried to give them the faith to believe they could cross the river Jordan and invade the Land of Canaan.

Instead, they came out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, went down to Mount Sinai at Kadesh Barnea, and then they went around in circles for forty years. We are told in the Book of Deuteronomy that it only takes eleven days to travel from Egypt to Canaan. (Deuteronomy 1:2)

In the wilderness, ten times God performed spectacular miracles for them to build their faith, but they continued to

march around in circles. On many occasions they sinned so grievously that Moses had to be both priest and prophet. He would go up on Mount Sinai as their priest and intercede for them with God. As their priest he essentially prayed, "God please forgive them, please forgive them." This happened ten times and ten times God forgave them (Numbers 14:22).

From Mount Sinai, Moses prayed, asking God to show patience by forgiving the sins of the children of Israel. The Lord pardoned them as Moses requested, but said, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me. Say to them 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing so I will surely do to you; your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me'" (Numbers 14:27-29).

What sorrow there was throughout the camp when Moses reported God's words to the people! They had risen early in the morning and started toward the Promised Land. They knew they had sinned, but were ready to go into the land the Lord had promised them. But Moses told them that it was too late. Because they had departed from the Lord, He had now departed from them.

This piece of history allegorically tells us something about our relationship with God. He forgave the children of Israel, but their sin still caused Him great pain. In the same way, there is more to our life in Christ than being forgiven. We were created, and we are recreated through our salvation, to glorify God by serving Him and entering into everything He has planned for us. The Bible says there is a purpose for our salvation; this experience of the nation of Israel wandering in

the wilderness and not entering Canaan demonstrates the awesome reality that it is possible for us to miss the purpose of our salvation in this life.

A Level of Decision

When a pilot is landing a large jet airplane, like a huge 747 passenger airplane, he reaches a point where he cannot abort but must commit to his landing. They call that point of no return, the LD, or the "level of decision." God is infinitely patient and full of grace. But, the fourteenth chapter of Numbers tells us there is what we might call a "level of decision" in our journeys of faith. There is a point in our walk with God where we decide that we either are, or we are not, going to do the will of God for our lives.

Even though God will do everything He can to get us to see His will and do it, He reaches a point with us where He will let us have our own way, and then find someone else to do what He is trying to get us to do. When God turns away from us because we stubbornly refuse to do His will, we suffer great loss, because we miss the purpose of our salvation in this life. We do not lose our salvation, but we lose the opportunity to fulfill the purpose, in this life, for which God has saved us (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Some of the saddest verses in this awesome fourteenth chapter of Numbers are those verses where Moses told them, "It is too late now! Take your weapons off! You departed from God and now God has departed from you!"

There is such a thing as the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God for every one of our lives (Romans 12:1,2). The Book of Numbers is about doing that will of God for our lives. When you read the fourteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers, see pictured there that level of decision where we all decide that

we either are, or we are not, going to do the will of God for our life. It is never too late to decide that we are not going to go around in circles anymore but invade and conquer the "Canaan" God has planned for us.

Chapter Five

Arresting Allegories

The Book of Numbers is filled with powerful metaphors and allegories. The Apostle Paul gave us the key to the devotional and personal application of the historical narratives of the Bible when he wrote: "All these things happened to them for examples and they are written as an admonition (warning) for you and me on whom the ends of the world are come" (I Corinthians 10:11). This means we should look for examples and warnings when we read the historical narratives of Scripture.

The word Paul used for "examples" is a word that can be translated as "types" or "little object lessons" or "allegories". When we say this book is filled with allegories, we do not mean that these events are not actual historical events. An allegory is a story or an event that has a deeper meaning that instructs us morally or spiritually.

The Cloud of Guidance

In the closing verses of Exodus we read that when the tabernacle in the wilderness, or the tent of worship, was completed and raised, a great miracle took place. Later, Solomon's Temple was built according to the same pattern of specifications God had given to Moses for the construction of this wilderness tent of worship. The Temple of Solomon was a

permanent temple of worship and it was gloriously built with lavish materials. When that Temple was dedicated, the Spirit of God, as a cloud, also came upon and filled Solomon's Temple so powerfully that the priests ran out of the temple (I Kings 8:10,11).

When Moses had obeyed God and built the wilderness tent of worship, we read that a great miracle took place: "On the day the Tabernacle was raised, the cloud covered it. And in the evening that cloud changed to the appearance of fire and stayed that way through the night. It was always so, the daytime cloud changing to the appearance of fire at night. When the cloud lifted, the people of Israel moved on to wherever it stopped and camped there.

"The Israelites followed the Spirit of God in the form of the cloud through the wilderness. In this way they journeyed at the command of the Lord and stopped where He told them to, then remained there as long as the cloud stayed. If it stayed a long time, they stayed a long time. If it stayed only a few days, they remained only a few days. When it moved, the people broke camp and followed. If the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle two days, two months, or a year, that is how long the people of Israel stayed. As soon as it moved, they moved. So it was that they camped, or traveled, at the commandment of the Lord" (Numbers 9).

This is a beautiful story of this miracle that symbolizes divine guidance, the miracle work of the Holy Spirit in us, and the anointing of the Spirit upon us. Later, in the New Testament, that tent of worship becomes a picture of our bodies, which become the temple in which the Holy Spirit lives and does His miracle work of regeneration. The Holy Spirit anoints us, indwells us, and fills us just like He did that tent of worship and the temple of Solomon.

You might ask the question, "If this cloud guided the children of Israel, and they obediently followed, why did that cloud not lead them right across the wilderness, across the river Jordan, and into the Promised Land? How is it that they were following the guidance of God and they were going around in circles?"

There is an important truth here. God gives the creatures He created freedom of choice. This pictures one of the most important ways in which God has created man in the image of his Creator. He will not violate our freedom to choose. If we have the faith to believe and claim all the blessings God has for us and accept His good and perfect will for our lives, then He can lead us into our spiritual Promised Land. He can place blessings upon us and lead us into the very center and heart of His will for our lives.

But, if we do not believe, then we will not find our spiritual "Promised Land." He made us creatures of choice and there is a sense in which He will not force us to do anything. God may lean on us like an elephant. He may make us a lot of offers that we cannot refuse. Sometimes, when we consider our options, the only sensible thing for us to do will be to surrender to Him and do His will.

In the New Testament, in Hebrews chapters three and four, we are told that they did not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief. That is what we can learn from the cloud and fire that did not lead the people directly across the wilderness into the Promised Land.

What Is It?

Another truth we find in the Book of Numbers is the story about the meat and the manna. God supernaturally fed His people with manna. Manna in Hebrew means, "What is it?" They never

could decide what it was, so they called it "what is it?" God fed them with "what is it?" for forty years.

We are told that God's people continually complained to Moses. Numbers 11:4-6 says: "Then the Egyptians who had come with them began to long for the good things of Egypt." Other people came out in the Exodus besides the Hebrew people. There were Gentiles, like Ethiopians and Egyptians, who came out with them. The Egyptians longed for the good things of Egypt. There is a lesson in this for us. It says, "This added to the discontent of the children of Israel and they wept. They said, 'Oh, for a few bites of meat. Oh, if we had some of the delicacies and fish that we enjoyed in Egypt'" (Numbers 11:4-6).

In this context, Egypt is a symbol of our old life of sin in the world. When someone who has been delivered from "Egypt" turns around and says, "Oh, for Egypt," this is a source of grief to God. God says to Moses in this passage, "Tell the people to purify themselves, for tomorrow they shall have meat. Tell them the Lord has heard your tearful complaints about all you left behind in Egypt." That is the focus; not the meat. God says He is going to give them meat until it comes out their noses. God said, "You have rejected the Lord, and you have wept for Egypt." That is the important point. After He had sent them this meat He also sent a plague. He did that because these people had lusted for meat and for Egypt.

The Scripture says that God will give us the desires of our heart. That is a great comfort, but that is also a great challenge. Are the desires of your heart for spiritual things or are the desires of your heart for Egypt?

God granted the Israelites' request, but He sent leanness to their souls (Psalms 106:15). That can be and is the case for many people who profess to be believers. We are creatures of choice. We can have what we choose. When we choose the garlic

and onions of Egypt, God will grant our requests, but He will send leanness to our souls. This arresting allegory challenges us with the question with which God opened His dialog with us in the Garden of Eden: "Where are you?" Are you still in Egypt? Are you in the Promised Land? Are you going around in circles between Egypt and Canaan? Are you in Canaan, but longing for the things of Egypt?

The Spies (chapter 13)

One such event is the story of how the Israelites sent twelve spies into Canaan. The spies were told to do some reconnaissance in the land of Canaan to see if the cities were protected or unprotected. They were also to find out what the people were like (many or few, weak or strong) to know how hard they would be to conquer.

When the twelve spies came back, they spoke a lot about the fruitfulness of the Promised Land. They brought back a cluster of grapes that was so large it took two of them to carry it on a sturdy pole. They also said that the people were giants, warriors who were powerfully built, and that Canaan's cities were strongly protected with gigantic walls that were so thick they constructed houses on the top of them.

Ten of the twelve spies were experts in "Giantology". As an old spiritual song expressed it: "Others saw the Giants. Caleb saw the Lord!" Someone has observed that these twelve spies were like the average group of elders, deacons, stewards, or members of a committee or leadership of a church. Two have the faith to invade Canaan, and ten are "Giantologists" who focused on the difficulties.

Caleb knew the strength of the fortified cities in Canaan, but he was not afraid. "Caleb reassured the people as he stood before Moses. 'Let us go up at once and take it for we are able

to conquer it'" (Numbers 13:29-31). God was so impressed with the faith of these two men that He was willing to trade the whole nation of people, somewhere between one and three million people, for Caleb and Joshua. He said, "All of you are going to die in this wilderness, and I am going to take those two men, Caleb and Joshua, with Me into the Promised Land because they wholly followed Me and they believed." God highly values faith. Two men with faith are worth more to Him than millions without it.

There is an interesting follow-up to this story. When they finally crossed the Jordan forty-five years later (Joshua 14), the children of Israel came to the city of Hebron. Caleb thought Hebron was the greatest city he had ever seen. He believed God would give Israel the strength to conquer Hebron. Moses was so impressed with Caleb's faith that he gave Caleb his solemn word that when Hebron was conquered, the city of Hebron would belong to Caleb.

After wandering in the desert for forty years, Caleb marched into the presence of Joshua, who was the leader after Moses died and reminded him of Moses' words. Caleb was eighty-five years old, but he knew that with God's help he could conquer Hebron.

Joshua gave the city of Hebron to Caleb and he conquered it. When the other Israelites were in the wilderness complaining so much that God had to send snakes out to bite them, Caleb would not be a part of their complaining. He focused his eyes on the Promised Land and never lost his vision.

Complainers and Snake Bites (Numbers 21)

God hates complaining and grumbling. He demonstrated how much He hates complaining when the children of Israel were grumbling and He sent snakes out to bite the gripers. Then,

when a lot of them were dying from their snakebites, God told Moses to take a serpent of brass and erect it on a pole in the center of the camp. Then the Good News was proclaimed throughout the camp, that any snake-bitten complainers who went to the center of the camp and looked at the brass serpent on the pole would be healed.

Many of the snake-bitten grippers doubted God, questioning how looking at a piece of brass could possibly heal their snakebites. They swelled up and died. But others decided that even though it did not make sense medically, trusting in God was the only hope they had. They crawled, were carried or dragged to the center of the camp and looked at the brass serpent. And they were healed!

We learn the Gospel application of this allegory when Jesus spends an evening with a Rabbi named Nicodemus. When the outstanding Rabbi in Jerusalem tells Jesus that he has come to hear what He has to say because he has been impressed with the things he has seen Jesus do, Jesus reminds Nicodemus of this great Old Testament miracle. Then Jesus applies the miracle to Himself. He tells Nicodemus that just as the serpent was lifted up on that pole, so was Jesus to be lifted up on the cross. All who look to him on His cross with faith will be saved from their sin problem the way the snake-bitten complainers were saved from their fatal snakebites. (John 3:14-16)

Look and Live

Have you taken that look of faith? Have you looked to Jesus Christ lifted up on His cross? Have you put your faith and trust in all that Jesus did for you there? He is the only solution for your sin problem because He was God's only Son when He died on the cross for you. That means Jesus Christ is God's

only Savior - and He is your only hope of finding a solution and a Savior to your eternally fatal problem of sin.

Chapter Six

Blueprint for a Burnout

A Rock and a Rod (chapter 20)

As we continue to look at the life of Moses, it is sad to realize that he never saw the Promised Land. In the end, God did not trade the whole nation for Moses. The sin of Moses is one of the mysteries of the Book of Numbers.

The record tells us that the Lord spoke to Moses and told him to take his rod and gather a group of people together. God told him to speak to the rock and it would bring forth water for the people and the animals. Although Moses doubted, he gathered the people. He struck the rock twice with his rod and water came out. The people and their animals drank. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe me, to hallow me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not enter into the Promised Land" (Numbers 20:11-13).

There are a couple of things we might consider as we look at the severity of God's punishment. First, who are we to tell God what is fair or right? God is the one who defines what is right and what is fair. Moses never complained about his punishment. Deuteronomy tells us that he had talked to God about it one day and God had said, "Speak to Me about this matter no further." Moses never brought it up again.

Secondly, God has a higher standard for leaders than He has for the people. The Scripture very clearly sets out before us a

double standard. When you become a member of a church, there are certain standards by which you should live. But a church, according to the Scriptures, should expect more from its leadership than it does from its fellowship or its people. God takes leadership very seriously. Moses was in a leadership position. What might seem a small sin to others was not a small sin because of who he was and the position in which God had placed him.

Apparently his sin was something like this. First of all, God said, "Speak to that rock over there." He did not speak to the rock; he hit the rock with his rod - twice. That was disobedience.

God charged Moses with another, more serious sin. God had taught Moses that He would always be with him and that He would be the One Who would deliver His people, and He would make Moses the human instrument of that great miracle. The great miracle of the exodus took place because Moses had learned what God could do through somebody who had learned that they were nobody. Moses spent forty years on the backside of a desert learning spiritual secrets like: "I'm not the deliverer, but He is, and He is with me. I can not deliver anybody, but He can, and He is with me." The great miracle happened because Moses could say when it happened, "I did not deliver those people, but He did because He was with me."

When Moses asked, "Must we bring you water from this rock?", he was not giving God the credit or the glory in the sight of the people. He was not making it clear to the people that it was God Who was doing this miracle. Moses was taking the credit and the glory for the miracle. That was the most serious part of the sin of Moses.

The only way we can see this from God's perspective is to realize that God has a set of standards that only He knows

about. He shares many of those standards with us, but remember, it is God Who teaches us to be righteous, not we who teach God. Judged by God's standards, the punishment of Moses was fair and right. Moses appears to have agreed with God. All the way through the miraculous Exodus miracle the rod of Moses symbolized these spiritual secrets Moses learned at the burning Bush. By personal application, there is profound truth for us to learn from the sin of Moses when he struck that rock with his rod.

The "Burnout" (Total Exhaustion) of Moses

In chapter eleven of the Book of Numbers there is another important story about Moses. We hear a lot today about the experience we call "burnout", a term used when people come to the end of themselves physically, emotionally, and mentally. Even great men of God get tired, and sometimes they even get "tired of". There is a difference between tired and tired of.

For example, in this chapter of Numbers, we hear Moses saying to the Lord, "I cannot carry this nation by myself. The load is far too heavy. If you are going to treat me like this, please kill me right now. It will be a kindness. Let me out of this impossible situation" (Numbers 23:9-11).

Have you ever felt like that? I find that Moses, Elijah, Job, David, John the Apostle, and many of the great men of God in the Scripture got so totally exhausted they told God they wanted to die. "Burnout" happens to godly people. The Scriptures tell us it happened to the greatest people of God who ever lived, like Moses, Elijah, Jonah, Job and many others. But when these men of God became so burned out that they asked God for the wrong thing - that He would take their lives - God spared them because God knew their hearts.

Moses already knew that only God could carry the enormous

burden of doing His supernatural work. He learned another vital lesson through his experience of "burnout". That lesson was that the work of God is a team sport. He realized that even though God was doing the work through him, he could not carry the burden of judging Israel by himself. When the burnout of Moses brought him to that realization, God gave him seventy men to help him carry the burden. God anointed the seventy men with the Holy Spirit and they governed under the leadership of Moses. Without taking the leadership away from Moses, God divided the work into more manageable parts and placed the seventy men over those divisions of the work. Those who earn a Master's degree today from a university in Business Administration will tell you that the five steps of a successful executive are: analyze, organize, deputize, supervise, and then agonize!

When Moses came to God burned out, God told him that his soul needed to be restored. He showed Moses the paths of righteousness that would give him rest for his soul. Those paths were to let God do the part that only He could do, and to remember that the work of God through the people of God is a team sport. That is the way God restores His people when they are totally exhausted.

We live in an impatient world and we want everything instantly. God does not usually give us things instantly. The restoration we see in Moses' life was very practical. Instead of fixing the situation instantly, God showed him how to organize and deputize others to help bear the burden.

It is amazing to think that a man as great as Moses could get burned out. Moses experienced "burnout" because he was every bit as human as you and me. Many people think that when you become a born-again disciple of Jesus, you are no longer human. When we look at the life of Moses, we realize that is not true. The Bible is filled with the stories of real people

who struggled with the same stresses and pressures that force us to discover the limitations of our weak humanity. They are examples for us because they did great things when the Spirit of God controlled their humanity.

By Application

We can add the story of Moses to a list of Bible characters whose lives demonstrate the miracle that God delights to do very extra-ordinary things through very ordinary people because they are available. The experience Moses had with God shows us that the people God uses must learn that the greatest ability is availability. Our greatest ability is our availability to God. In the Book of Numbers we see the greatness of Moses, the "burnout" of Moses, and the sin of Moses. God used Moses because he was available. God wants to use you and me because we are available. Have you made yourself available to God? Do you want to be available to God? Then, join God's special club and say to God: "Anything, Anywhere, and Anytime. I do not care what it makes me. I do not care where it takes me. I do not care what it costs me. I am available!"

The Book of Deuteronomy

Chapter Seven

Growing Children

The word "Deuteronomy" means, "the restating of the Law." But Deuteronomy is more than a restating of the Law. This inspired law book is also an application of the law of God to the second generation of God's chosen people.

The Book of Deuteronomy is also a record of the great sermons Moses preached to Israel before they crossed Jordan and invaded Canaan. The opening passage helps us understand what Deuteronomy is all about. We are told that: "This book records Moses' address to the people of Israel when they were camped in the valley of Arabah, in the wilderness of Moab, east of the Jordan River. The speech was given forty years after the people left Mount Horeb" (Deuteronomy 1:1,3).

As we learned in the Book of Numbers, the children of Israel had been on a wilderness march for forty years. They had come out of Goshen, in Egypt, had gone down to Mount Sinai, and over to Kadesh-barnea. Then, because they did not have the faith to invade Canaan, they had gone around in circles for thirty-eight years. A whole generation perished in that wilderness!

Finally, the children of the generation that died in the wilderness had the faith to invade Canaan. They were camped to the east of the Jordan River before they planned to march through the River Jordan and invade Canaan. With the exception of Caleb and Joshua, the entire generation who were living when the Law was first given had died. Before they invaded Canaan, Moses wanted to make sure that these children heard the Word given to him for them and their parents on Mount Sinai. He also wanted to challenge them to make a solemn commitment to teach the Law of God to their children.

Sometimes believers go around in circles for years. When they decide to conquer their spiritual "Canaan" and experience the life in Christ for which Christ has saved them, when they decide they do want to get from God everything God has for them, they are ready for the Book of Deuteronomy. This book is filled with lessons for someone who has decided to take another, more serious, look at their new life in Christ and be totally

committed to Him. If that is where you are, then the Book of Deuteronomy is for you.

Another important theme in the Book of Deuteronomy has to do with the Word of God becoming a reality to His people. In one of his greatest sermons, Moses challenged the children of the lost generation to make sure they passed His Word on to their children.

The Greatest Sermon of Moses

Some people think Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is the greatest sermon Moses ever preached. This passage of Scripture was considered Judaism's basic confession of faith. Here is the heart of that sermon: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words, which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:3-10).

There is more to the sermon, but that is the heart of it and the heart of the Book of Deuteronomy. What Moses was really saying to these people right before they crossed the Jordan and invaded Canaan was that God had called them to be a people who loved Him with all their being. In order to show their love for Him, they had to obey His Word. And to obey His Word, they had to know His Word. God wanted their children to be a people who would one day love God with all their being. Therefore, Moses charged them to love God with all their being, to know and obey His Word, and to pass those values on to their children.

The Four Foundations of Parenting

What Moses was really telling them was how to teach their children to be people of God. The teaching described here by Moses rests on four foundations. The first foundation is God's Word. If children are to love God, then the basis of their learning must be the Word of God. The Scripture later says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:5-7).

A second foundation upon which this educational process is based is Responsibility. Who is responsible for the nurture of children? Some people think the responsibility for the education of children is the government. They look at public schools and think that the state should teach their children what they need to know. Others say it is the responsibility of the church. They take their children to Sunday School every week thinking the church will teach them to love God and His Word.

Moses placed the responsibility for the education of the children totally upon the shoulders of their parents. He charges the fathers to let the Word of God dwell in their hearts and then to teach it to their children. Moses is inspired and deliberate when he mandates that the father is to do this teaching of the Scriptures to the children. The Scriptures will consistently reinforce this preference.

A third foundation upon which the educational process prescribed by Moses rests is Relationship. Moses preached, "When you get up in the morning with them, when you sit in the house with them, when you go out into the way with them, when you lie down at night with them, teach them the words of God" (Deuteronomy 6:7). Many fathers think this is not realistic, because they are not home when their children wake up or when they go to bed.

It is important to interpret your personal culture in the light of the Scripture instead of interpreting Scripture in light of your personal culture. In this case, the Bible should not be interpreted by the schedule you have set for your work. Your work schedule should be interpreted in the light of these Scriptures. This great sermon of Moses is instructing you to have a relationship with your children that will shape the dynamic of your family culture. There is no way you can follow Moses' directions and not have a relationship with your children. That relationship is a vital part of the educational process.

The fourth foundation upon which Moses' process for nurturing children is based, is what I call Reality. Make the observation that Moses said, "Let these words dwell in your heart. You love God with all your heart, and then teach these words diligently to your children." Do not miss that important reality. Our children learn more from what we are and do than from what we say.

Jesus said, "Show Me your treasures, and you will show Me what your values are. Show Me your values, and you will show Me where your heart is" (Matthew 6:20-22). In plain language, what that means is show me where and how you spend your money, how you spend your time and energy, and you will show me where your heart is. Our children learn more from watching the way we live than from listening to the things we teach them about our family values. What we teach our children is not in our lectures about values, but in what our values actually are.

The four foundations on which the great blueprint of Moses for the nurture of children rest are God's Word, responsibility, relationship and reality.

Chapter Eight

Memories of Miracles

There is a strong emphasis throughout the Book of Deuteronomy on the importance of obeying the Word of God. When Israel obeyed God's laws, He blessed them. When they did not obey God's laws, they did not enjoy the blessings of God. Moses points that out very eloquently and then preaches that they must obey the Word of God. One of the key words in this book is the word, "obey".

The main purpose of Moses' first sermon in Deuteronomy was to help these Hebrews remember how God had worked in the lives of their parents and to remember the miracles God had performed for them. Moses hoped the miracles God performed on the wilderness march for their parents would have a deep and permanent effect on the lives of this generation, and that they would tell their children about those miracles.

Moses also forcefully preached that they must never break their covenant with God. A covenant is a contract between God and His people. The terms of that contract are spelled out. If the people do not keep the conditions of the contract, there is no contract. God is not responsible to bless them if they are not obedient.

Chapter five is a repetition of the Ten Commandments. Compare the statement of the commandments in the Book of Exodus (chapter 20) with this restatement of the commandments in Deuteronomy. If you carefully compare these two records of the Ten Commandments, you will gain new insights into these Laws of God. In this repetition of the commandments, Moses is telling the Hebrews to have hearts for God and to obey His commandments.

If they do so, all will go well with them in the future and with their children throughout all generations.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses preached to the people, "You must obey all the commandments of the Lord your God, following His directions in every detail, going the whole way He has laid out for you. Only then will you live long and prosperous lives" (Deuteronomy 27:9-11).

The great sermon of Moses in chapter six, which has become the basic Jewish confession of faith, is called "The Shema" (which means "hear" in Hebrew), because this sermon begins with the words "Hear, Oh Israel." The purpose of this sermon was to challenge the second generation of the people of God to pass the Word of God on to their children, the third generation of the nation of Israel. We find the blueprint of Moses for parents nurturing children in this beautiful sermon of Moses.

The eighth chapter of Deuteronomy gives us another eloquent and profound sermon of Moses. This is a sermon about the importance of obeying God's Word. Moses also shows us here how we can learn the Word of God. This great sermon tells us the purposes of the Word of God. God gave us His Word because He wants us to know how to live. God created us and He knows how we can have a fulfilled life. Jesus came saying, "I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Moses tells us in this great message how we can enter into that abundant life (Deuteronomy 8:1-14).

Moses preaches that the Word of God is all about life. If you want to understand the Word of God, there are at least two ways you can study it. You can go to a university, seminary, or Bible college. You can also study the Word of God intellectually and academically yourself. But, according to Moses, that is not the only way to study the Word of God. If the Word of God is all about life, then another way to learn the Word of God is to

study life. The Word gives us insight into life and life gives us insight into the Word.

When God lets us go hungry and suffer through the storms of life, we turn to Him and realize that He is the source of life and of everything we need to live life as He designed the life He intended when He created us. It is through our wilderness wanderings, through our hard experiences of life, that God makes us know that "Man does not live by bread alone." Man lives by obeying every Word that God has given him. The children of Israel did not learn the Word of God in a seminary or a synagogue. They learned the Word of God in the context of real life experience.

Another lesson we should learn from the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy is to guard ourselves against the dangers of prosperity. Have you ever realized that being blessed by prosperity can be a challenge? These chosen people had learned the Word of God through the hardship of God's discipline. When they were punished for their disobedience, they learned that the Word of God was the key to life. Moses is now warning them that they must apply what they learned in difficult times to their lives when God abundantly blesses them: "Never forget the lessons you learned in your trials and times of testing. When you get to the place where you are prospering, that is the time to beware." A New Testament version of this same message is, "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).

Moses follows his great sermon on the Word of God with a great sermon on the grace of God. Repeating for emphasis, he tells these people four times that they have not been chosen by God because they are good and have earned or achieved the favor of God: "Jehovah your God is not giving you this good land because you are good, because you are not good. You are a

wicked, stubborn people" (Deuteronomy 9:4-6).

This is a beautiful picture of God's grace. The mercy of God withholds from us what we deserve. The grace of God lavishes on us the favor and blessings of God that we do not deserve. God does not bless us because we are good. God blesses us because He is good and because He loves us. That is what the word "grace" means.

Moses gives us a clear and candid profile of the grace of God in this great sermon in the ninth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. You will see an emphasis on grace all the way through the Bible because the grace of God is the dynamic attribute of God we find at the source of our salvation. The grace of God is not earned or achieved by a positive performance from us.

Chapter Nine

More Great Sermons of Moses

Now that we have considered the great sermon of Moses on the grace of God in chapter nine, we are ready to reflect on his sermon about our response to God's grace in chapter ten.

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good? Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it. The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. Therefore

circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer."

The emphasis here is how we respond to God's grace. God loves us even when we fail. Nothing we do can ever earn His love, because His love is not won or lost by our performance.

Nothing you do can cause God to stop loving you. His love is not conditional. The unconditional love of God fuels the mercy and grace of God. That is what the word "grace" means. Grace is a double-edged sword. It cuts two ways. First, it makes the statement that the love of God and His blessing is not based upon how well you perform. When you understand the words grace, mercy and love as they express the character and personality of God, you will realize that you do not have to worry about trying to earn God's love. He is going to love you anyway, because of the very essence of His mercy, grace, and love.

You cannot lose God's mercy, grace, or love because of a negative performance. God does not love you because you are good and He will not stop loving you if you are bad. God loves you. Jesus loves you when you are good, when you do the things you should. Jesus loves you when you are bad, though it makes Him very sad. But, Jesus loves you. That is the message of the whole Bible, and that is the message of Deuteronomy.

How do you respond to the mercy, grace, and love of God? Another way of asking that same question is to ask you, "How much do you love God?" A godly woman who lived in another century said, "I would rather go to Hell than to grieve the Holy Spirit one more time." We ought to want to please this God, who loves us anyway, and we should never want to hurt this God because we love Him. That should motivate us to cleanse our lives of things that displease Him and then serve Him and express our response to His love in loving and grateful worship.

After telling us much about the grace of God and our salvation, the Apostle Paul says to us, "I beseech you that you receive not the grace of God in vain" (II Corinthians 6:1). Just as it is a sin to speak the name of God in vain, it is also a sin to receive His grace in vain. If God loves us and lavishes blessings upon us by His grace, if we never do anything with that grace, we are committing the sin of taking the name of the Lord in vain. The great sermon of Moses in chapter ten warns us to never receive God's grace in vain.

This is followed by a sermon on the subject of apostasy (chapter 13). Apostasy means, "to stand or fall away from a position that you have taken with God." Moses told these chosen people, that if a son, daughter, wife or even a best friend tried to pull them away from God, they should put that person to death and have no pity on them. He told them that if they came upon an apostate city, they should destroy it. That sounds very severe, but if you study the results of apostasy - the Babylonian Captivity, the Assyrian Captivity - you will see why God was so severe when He showed Moses how to deal with the problem of apostasy.

Moses also preached a sermon on tithing (14:22-28). The word "tithe" in Hebrew means "tenth". We are commanded to give God one tenth of everything we have. Tithing teaches we should always put God first in our lives. God does not need ten percent of our incomes. God mandated the law of the tithe because tithing is one way we can measure our commitment to Him. The important truth God teaches us through tithing is learned when we understand that the tithe was the first tenth of everything the chosen people earned or received as their God provided for their needs. God knows whether or not He is first in our lives, but sometimes we do not know. That is why God

commanded us to show that He is first in our priorities by giving God the first tenth of all that we receive.

God wants the first tenth. When the Hebrews went into the land of Canaan, the first city they conquered was Jericho. All the spoils of that city went to God because it was the first city they conquered. There are two words that express the essence of books, chapters, and verses in the Bible. Those two words are: GOD FIRST! Putting God first is not easy, but putting God first is not complicated. We complicate the simple and God simplifies the complicated. We complicate what it means to put God first because we do not want to put God first. Tithing helps us to get real with ourselves and measure the degree to which God is first in our lives.

In the fifteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses gives us a great sermon on the importance of charity toward the poor. There is a very strong emphasis on charity in the Law of Moses and in the Old Testament. Moses mandates several ways the tithes of the people of God should be distributed. It should be given to the Levites - which is the biblical basis for a paid clergy. It should go to the foreigner in the land who is hurting. The children of Israel were also commanded to give to the widows and the orphans among them.

When Moses spoke to the chosen people about charity, he said, "You are a stubborn and stiff-necked people." He warned them not to complain about having to share with those who are in need (15:1-11). He preaches that there would always be poor people among them and that is why this commandment was necessary.

As a prophet, Moses foretold the Word of God as a great preacher. Israel had no king and would not have one for about 500 years. We will read the details of how they came to crown their first king when we survey the book of First Samuel. But

Moses told the children of Israel that God would one day grant them their wish and give them a king. Then he prophetically wrote a commandment into his inspired law books that when they have their kings, their king must copy the laws from the book kept by the Levite priests and read it every day of his life so he could learn to respect the Lord and obey His commandments. This regular reading of God's Word would prevent him from feeling that he was better than other people. It would also prevent him from turning away from God's laws, and would give him a long, good reign.

In David's first Psalm, he profiles the blessed man as a man who meditates in the law of God day and night. He then names all the blessings this man has because he delights in God's Word and walks in the counsel he finds in the Word of God. Since David was the second king of Israel, he had to obey this prophetic commandment of Moses. The blessings of the blessed man David outlines in that first Psalm are like a spiritual autobiography of David's life. The reasons Moses gives for prescribing this commandment were obviously fulfilled in David's life.

In the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, there is a strong sermon of Moses against the occult. Moses uses very strong language to make it clear that God does not favor things like the fortuneteller or the medium. The sermon says: "No Israeli may practice black magic or call upon evil spirits for aid or be a fortune teller or a serpent charmer, medium or wizard, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone doing these things is an object of horror and disgust to the Lord. It is because the nations do these things that the Lord your God will displace them. The nations you replace do all these things, but the Lord your God will not permit you to do these things" (18:9-14).

Someone has said there are more things between heaven and earth than men have ever dreamed. Observe that the Scripture does not say these things do not exist. It tells us to stay away from them. There are spirits in the spiritual world that are not holy or of God. When you are involved with fortune telling, wizards and all these other things, you are dealing with a spirit that is not of God. God through Moses, therefore, strongly forbids His people to get involved in the underworld of spirits that are not of God. The rationale of God through Moses seems to be that we have the Holy Spirit of God to guide us into the realm of heavenly spirits. It is therefore a sin for us to ask those who deal in the negative spirit world to guide, direct and empower us in any way.

There is a great sermon in the Book of Deuteronomy on the Messianic Prophet. Moses said, "One day a prophet is going to come into the world. When you were at Mount Sinai and God handed the Law down, you said to Him, through me, 'Oh, we do not want God to speak with us. We cannot stand to hear the voice of God'" (Deuteronomy 18:15-17). Moses told the nation of Israel that God heard their prayer and would send a prophet into the world through whom He would speak.

God gave them a miraculous written word, but He wanted to speak with them beyond that written word. In His mercy and love for them, God was going to speak to them through a very special Prophet. That prophet was going to be the Messiah who would be their Prophet, Priest and King.

There are some great sermons in chapter nineteen on capital punishment. The focus in this passage is not on the criminal and what a shame it is to put someone to death. In the inspired statement of Moses about capital punishment, the focus is on the victims of that criminal. This Scripture tells us that capital punishment will cleanse evil from Israel.

A great sermon on faith is found in chapter twenty. Gideon will apply this passage when he leads an army against the Midianites who had conquered Israel (Judges 7:1-7).

"When you fight armies that are greater than you, remember, your only hope is that God is with you. Faith is what you need when you attack those armies that are greater than you" (Deuteronomy 20:6-8).

We see the concept of "grace" demonstrated frequently in the Book of Deuteronomy. We also encounter the concept of "redemption". The law of the Kinsman Redeemer in Deuteronomy 25 is a beautiful picture of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The first time you run into the word "redeemer" or "redemption", these words are legal terms. But if you understand the legal meaning of redemption, then you can understand redemption when the Old and New Testaments apply the concept to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. This passage in chapter 25, which gives us the law of the Kinsman Redeemer, is the key that unlocks the meaning and the application of the Book of Ruth.

At the end of the books of Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and Joshua, you will find a great command to obey the Word of God. This, again, is the main point of Deuteronomy. Some of the greatest preaching the world has ever heard is in the last chapters of Deuteronomy, where Moses promised the blessing of God upon the Hebrew people if they obeyed the Word of God and the opposition of God if they did not. Moses concluded this dynamic sermon by preaching: "I have set before you life or death. Oh, that you would choose life; that you and your children might live!" (Deuteronomy 30:19)

The Book of Joshua

Chapter Ten

Possess Your Possessions

The Book of Joshua in some ways is the opposite of the Book of Numbers. Numbers is a story of unbelief in which the Hebrew people perished as a consequence of their lack of faith. The Book of Joshua is all about faith, the kind of faith that conquers and possesses all that God wills for His people.

When we surveyed the Book of Exodus we learned that the name "Exodus" means "the way out" of the cruel bondage of Egyptian slavery. This first history book could be called, "Eisodus" because it is all about "the way in" to the Promised Land of Canaan. ("Ex" = "out of" "Eis" = "into") The theme of the Book of Joshua is, "Possess Your Possessions."

The name Joshua is the same as the name Jesus. Jesus is the way you say it in Greek. Joshua, or Ya-shu-a, is the way you say it in Hebrew. The name means "Savior" or "Jehovah saves". In his name, this great leader is a picture of Christ because He leads his people into the Promised Land of spiritual blessing.

The keyword in salvation from our spiritual Egypt is the word "believe". The keyword to entering into the Promised Land of God's spiritual blessing is the word "obey". We are talking about faith when we talk about obedience. The word faith means commitment, the kind of commitment that obeys.

Joshua was forty years old at the time of the Exodus. Remember that Joshua and Caleb were the only two survivors of the wilderness wanderings because they brought back a good report when they were sent into Canaan as spies. God saw their faith as something worthy of great reward. Joshua was eighty years old when he received orders to lead the people into the

Land of Canaan and conquer the seven mighty nations that were defending it. He did not receive his orders directly from God, but from Moses, a man of God who knew God and who knew Joshua.

The relationship between Moses and Joshua is a great model of the Paul/Timothy relationship that is so very important in preparing leaders for the people and work of God (II Timothy 2:2). Joshua was one hundred and ten years old when he died. He was a man of strength, loyalty, and great faith.

As we observe God working through a prophet/priest leader, we see a change that is important as we come into the leadership of Joshua. Moses received the Word of God on Mount Sinai directly from God, just as he received his orders at the burning bush directly from God. But now we read that Joshua is told to meditate upon the written Word - the Word that had already been given by God to Moses. Like the kings of Israel who were to follow him, Joshua is commanded to think about the Word of God, day and night, and that he must obey these commandments of God.

Just as the Hebrews were about to cross the river Jordan and invade Canaan, this is what they were told: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (Joshua 1:3). The whole land had been given to them, and in terms of ownership they had it all, but not in terms of possession. The law of possession was that every square meter of the Land of Canaan that you set your foot upon, that is what I have given to you - no more and no less.

That is the way it is with our spiritual blessings. There are many spiritual blessings that are available to us today: prayer, the Scripture itself, fellowship, worship - God gives them all to every believer. But some believers possess those spiritual blessings and some do not. The key is very practical. You have to set your foot upon them. You possess prayer by praying, you possess worship by worshiping, you possess the

Scripture when you read it, understand it, and apply it. You possess your spiritual possessions one square foot, one step at a time.

Many scholars say that the Book of Ephesians is to the New Testament what the Book of Joshua is to the Old Testament. The Book of Ephesians tells us about all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ and that it is possible for us to enter into Christ and possess all of those spiritual blessings.

The key verse of the Book of Joshua is Joshua 1:3. The key verse of Ephesians is Ephesians 1:3, which reads just like the key verse of Joshua: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." God has given us the title to all the spiritual blessings He has given us, but we must come to where they are and possess them.

In the Book of Joshua those blessings are in the Promised Land. In the Book of Ephesians they are in Christ. If we want to possess these spiritual blessings, we must find them by dwelling in Christ. We must come into the heavenly place, because that is where they all are. The Book of Joshua teaches us that we can enter into the "Promised Land" of God's blessing by faith. Paul tells us the same thing when he writes his inspired letter to the Ephesians.

Other New Testament authors write about the spiritual "Promised Land". Listen to Peter's version of where and how we possess our spiritual possessions: "... According as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 1:3).

Peter could not read or write (II Peter 5:12; Acts 4:13). His emphasis was on knowing God. Peter was not a scholar, but he was a spiritual giant; he knew God. And he tells us that God is

the source of all spiritual blessings and God has given us these through our relationship with Him (II Peter 1:3). According to Peter, God has already given us all the things we need to live a godly life. But, to possess our spiritual possessions, we must claim them in a relational knowledge of God.

The two great leaders of the New Testament Church agree with each other and with Joshua that we hold the title that says we own every spiritual blessing we need. But we must possess those spiritual blessings, one step at a time, in our relationship with God, and with Christ.

Joshua says we have it all, Peter says we have it all, Paul says we have it all. Why then do we not actually possess it all? These great men of God all agree that it is because we do not understand that the bridge of faith closes the gap between all that God has given us and our ability to possess what God has given us. That is why God has given us the Book of Joshua.

In the Book of Joshua we find sixteen great illustrations of faith. When God wanted us to know about faith in the Book of Genesis, He gave us twelve chapters telling us about the man Abraham. Faith must be very important to God because the purpose of the entire Book of Joshua is to show us how to live by faith, and walk by faith into all the spiritual blessings He has given us.

The Book of Joshua is about the land of Canaan. This land of Canaan is to be entered; it is to be conquered one city at a time, one nation at a time. But the spiritual and devotional message of Joshua is not really about a geographical place, it is about possessing your spiritual possessions by faith.

The land of Canaan pictures the purpose of the salvation of this special nation of people. Since the word "salvation" means "deliverance", their deliverance from Egypt is an allegory of our salvation. Our salvation comes from believing that Jesus

Christ is God's only Son and our only Savior. When we put our faith in Him, He delivers us from our sins, or our "spiritual Egypt". Their invasion and conquest of Canaan pictures the quality of life God has designed for people who have experienced their salvation from the "Egypt" dimension of their lives.

The Apostle Paul tells us that God saves us by grace, through faith. According to Paul, our salvation is not by any self-achievement on our part. It is a gift of God, not the result of our good works. However, Paul also writes that we are saved for good works, which God has pre-determined for us. He wants us to walk in those good works. Those good works are the purpose of our salvation in this life and they are part of the spiritual "Promised Land" our loving God wants us to possess - one square meter at a time.

Salvation is more than a one-way ticket to heaven. There is a present purpose for our salvation: our spiritual "Canaan" here on earth. The reason we do not possess our spiritual possessions may be that we do not know how to possess them. That is why God has given us the Book of Joshua. God has given us this first history book of the Old Testament to showcase for us the quality of faith through which we can possess our spiritual possessions.

Chapter Eleven

Possessing the Promises

The Book of Joshua is the record of the conquest of the land of Canaan. As we study this record, we will see "A Panorama of Faith." When we read the Book of Joshua, we are given a good idea of how to possess our spiritual blessings.

Many chapters give us examples and warnings that show us what faith is and what faith is not. These chapters will be laced with warnings about the dangers of "the world, the flesh, and the devil."

The first thing we see in the Book of Joshua is what we might call "A Transition of Faith." We see a transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua as we read:

"Joshua was full of the Spirit, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed Joshua as they followed the commandments the Lord had given to Moses. After the death of Moses, the Lord's disciple, God spoke to Joshua and said to him, 'Moses my disciple is dead. You are the new leader of Israel. Lead my people. Be strong and brave, for you will be a successful leader of my people. You need only to be strong and courageous and to obey every law Moses gave you. For if you are careful to obey every one of them, you will be successful in everything you do.

"Constantly remind the people about these laws, and you yourself must think about them every day and every night so that you will be sure to obey all of them. Only then will you succeed. Be bold and strong. Remember the Lord your God is with you wherever you go'" (Joshua 1:6-8).

In the early chapters of the Book of Joshua, we see what we might call, "Perplexities of Faith." As we grow in our understanding of faith, we must not be troubled when we come across problems that raise questions that challenge our faith. If we could eliminate all the problems and obstacles that raise these questions of faith, we would eliminate the need for faith itself.

The character Rahab in Joshua chapter two raises problems and questions about faith for many people. Two Jewish spies came to her home and she hid them. When the King of Jericho's

men came looking for the Jews, she sent them away in another direction. God blessed her for this. We read in the great faith chapter of the Bible that Rahab is a heroine of faith because she lied.

If you look at the story closely, you will see that Rahab was not profiled as an example of faith because she lied. In the faith chapter we read: "By faith, the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe." When the Jewish spies came to her house, Rahab said, "I know that you people represent the true and the living God. Many people over here fear you greatly. We believe that God is with you" (Joshua 2:9).

The Hebrew spies made a covenant with her and promised to spare her life. Why was she saved? Her faith saved her. She believed that the Hebrew people were God's people and that their God was the true and the living God. Rahab became one of the people of God because she had faith.

In chapter three you will find "The Affirmation of Faith." When God is trying to give us the faith to enter our spiritual Canaan, He will often prove our faith to encourage us. We see this in the life of Gideon, who put out a fleece that God honored. David tells us that, "A person's steps are confirmed by the Lord" (Psalm 37:23). That means that as we take steps of faith, God blesses and confirms those steps of faith.

In this chapter, God proved Himself to Joshua and showed the people that His blessing was upon their leader, Joshua, just as it was upon Moses. He also performed these miracles for the strengthening of the faith of the people. The purpose of these miracles was to show them that God was with them, and when they attacked the heavily fortified cities of Canaan, like Jericho, He would bless them with victory.

In chapter four the children of Israel built "An Altar of Faith." As they crossed the river Jordan, even though it was

flood tide, the waters parted and they crossed on dry ground. As they crossed, they were commanded to build a pillar of rocks, a memorial to this great miracle so their children would never forget what God had done for them when they had the faith to cross the river Jordan.

In chapter five we see "Prerequisites of Faith." Before the people of Israel invaded Canaan, they were commanded to circumcise every male among them. The second male generation never had been circumcised. The first generation, you remember, died in the wilderness. This story is a beautiful example of the conditions of authentic faith. Before you can enter into the Promised Land of God's blessing, you must ask yourself if there is any sin in your life. Is there any sin in your life from which you need to separate yourself?

When we surveyed the Book of Genesis, we learned that many professing believers take a bypass around that altar of repentance Abraham built when his life was a walking definition of faith for us. They have never allowed God to deal with the sin in their lives. We simply must repent of the sin in our lives before we can expect God's blessing upon our faith. That is what this commandment to circumcise the male population is all about. It is an outward symbol of expression that reveals an inward commitment of faith in our hearts. The meaning of the circumcision we find in the Old Testament is very much like the meaning of the baptism we find in the New Testament.

In Joshua chapter five, you will also find "A Commission of Faith." This is found at the end of chapter five. Joshua had issued the order that none his soldiers should draw their sword. An army camped on the east of Jordan in total darkness could easily be infiltrated and attacked by an enemy. They, therefore, usually issued the order, "Do not unsheathe your sword." If

they saw anyone with their sword uncovered, they would know he was the enemy and could react quickly.

Joshua went out for a midnight walk the evening before the Battle of Jericho. He saw a man with his sword drawn. Joshua challenged him, "Are you friend or foe?" The answer was, "I am Commander in Chief of the Lord's army!" We read that Joshua fell to the ground before this man and worshipped Him and said, "Give me your command." The Commander in Chief said, "Take off your shoes, because this is holy ground." We read, "And Joshua did" (Joshua 5:14-16).

According to chapter six of the Book of Joshua, the battle plan that Joshua received from the Lord the night before the battle was that the entire population of Israel was instructed to come out of its camp, march right up to the wall of the city, and then march around the city of Jericho. They were to do this once every day for six days.

On the seventh day they were told to march around the city seven times. They were commanded to march around that city a total of thirteen times. The city was protected by a wall that was so thick houses were built on top of the wall. The people defending the city would put women, and the infirm people who could not bear arms, on top of the wall with red-hot coals, boulders, or almost anything they could throw down on the heads of their attackers.

One great general named Abimelech was shamed by the fact that he went too close to the wall as he was attacking a city. An old woman dropped a large millstone on his head. With his skull crushed, Abimelech said to his armor bearer, "Take my sword out and run me through, lest it be said that a woman killed Abimelech" (Judges 9:52-54). That became a kind of watchword warning to Israeli military: "Never go close to a city wall. Remember Abimelech!"

Yet God was telling Joshua to take all of his people right up to the great wall of the city of Jericho and march around it thirteen times! This was Joshua's first military campaign and he would have been eager to demonstrate his gifts as a military strategist. Joshua will soon demonstrate the fact that he was a brilliant military strategist. This battle plan was ridiculous and made Joshua look very foolish. Joshua implemented every detail of this plan because he knew one thing about this plan and it was all he needed to know about the plan: *It was God's plan!*

All the time they were marching around the walls of Jericho, they were told not to say a word. The people of Jericho must have been filled with awe because they did not drop anything on the Israelis. After marching around the city seven times on that seventh day, Joshua turned to the people and commanded, "Shout!"

The Book of Hebrews says the walls of Jericho fell down by faith. Joshua was on the point leading that procession of all the people of Israel around those walls of Jericho. That took faith. It took faith for him to expose all those people to everything on that wall, once a day for six days, and then seven times on the seventh day.

The Battle of Jericho shows us the kind of faith that makes it possible for us to enter into our "Promised Land", and live as godly people. That kind of faith is practical. It is a faith that walks. The faith of Joshua that walked around Jericho thirteen times is not a mystery. That quality of faith is simply obedience. A faith that "walks" is a faith that works. The faith that walked and worked that day was a faith that won the Battle of Jericho for Joshua and the people of Israel. That caliber of faith can work and win your battles of life today.

Is your faith that kind of faith? Some people think that faith should not act until they understand everything with their minds. But Jesus taught His followers to commit themselves to action first, and He promised that the intellectual affirmation would follow. He said, "If any man will do, he shall know" (John 7:17). First (in principle), walk around Jericho thirteen times, and then you will discover a faith that works and wins.

King David wrote in Psalm 27, "I would have fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living." Some people think that "seeing is believing", or that seeing will lead to believing. But God's Word teaches us that believing leads to seeing. We see this prescribed pattern for faith pictured allegorically in the Battle of Jericho.

God still commissions us with His plans for our lives. Sometimes, His commission for our lives will test our faith as His battle plan for Jericho tested the faith of Joshua. If you know God well enough, you know that His commission will not take you where His grace cannot keep you. If you know God is leading you to do something, do it (John 2:5). The Book of Joshua teaches us that faith is practical. When it walks, it works, and when it works, it wins the battles of life.

Chapter Twelve

The Enemies of Faith

After the defeat at Ai, we read that Joshua fell flat on his face in fervent prayer. God responded to Joshua's prayer by asking Joshua, "Why are you crying out to Me? Israel has sinned!" When we see evidences of the glorious reality that God is with us, that evidence gives us the courage to keep on

keeping on and our faith grows as we do. But, when it is clear that God is not with us, we should be on our faces until we find out why God is not with us. Why would God respond to the prayer of Joshua with that question?

In the Book of Exodus, we read that the children of Israel had their backs to the Red Sea and the Egyptian army was attacking them. Moses fell flat on his face before God in fervent prayer. God asked Moses the same question He asked Joshua when he was flat on his face in prayer. God asked Moses why he was praying when it was perfectly obvious that he should speak to the people of God to go forward - right into the sea!

Since Jericho was the first city they conquered in Canaan, the law of the tithe demanded that the spoils of the first city conquered belonged to the Lord. None of the spoils of battle were to be confiscated by an Israeli soldier. Obviously, some soldier had taken something in Jericho for himself. God told Joshua to march the twelve tribes of Israel by in review. When God showed Joshua the guilty tribe, God then ordered a review of the clans that made up that tribe. God showed Joshua the guilty clan. Every family in that clan was reviewed man by man until a man named Achan was found to be the guilty sinner. He confessed to taking gold, silver, and a garment from Jericho, which he had buried in his tent. He was summarily executed.

In these history books we are instructed to look for examples and warnings (I Corinthians 10:11). Just as the faith of Joshua is an example for us to follow, the disobedience of Achan is obviously a warning for us to heed. When God lays His finger on the sin in our lives, we are to put to death that sin so that the blessing of God might return to our lives (Colossians 3:5, 6; Romans 8:13). We see this spiritual discipline pictured in the warning of the life of Achan.

The World, the Flesh, and the Devil

Since we are instructed that we are not to love the world or the things of this world, for centuries devout souls have seen an allegory of the world in the experience of Achan at Jericho. Their defeat at Ai is considered an allegory of the flesh. Jesus taught: "The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). The flesh is human nature unaided by God. Since the flesh causes our spiritual defeats, this defeat at Ai is seen as an allegory of the flesh. The next experience of Israel recorded in the Book of Joshua is an allegory that represents the third enemy of faith, which is the devil.

The children of Israel now meet people who are called Gibeonites. Like Rahab, the Gibeonites realized that the people of Israel were moving through Canaan killing everybody. They knew they were going to die so they tricked the Israelites. They rubbed their shoes on rocks until they looked as if they had been worn for many years and they made their clothes look as if they were very old. Although they were people who were living in the land that was to be conquered, they pretended that they had come from a distant land.

The Israelis made a treaty with these people without checking with the Lord first. The Gibeonites begged them, "Make a treaty with us. We are not from the Land of Canaan. We are from far, far away." They entered into a treaty with the Gibeonites. After they had made the treaty, the children of Israel found out that the Gibeonites were not from a far-off land, but were from Canaan. Since they had made a treaty with the Gibeonites, because the chosen people had absolute integrity, they could not kill them. They made servants of these people who had deceived them.

The Gibeonites complete an allegory of the enemies of faith in the Book of Joshua. The first enemy of our faith, the world,

is pictured by Jericho. Achan's story is an allegory that pictures our desire for the things of this world. In the same way he desired the garment, gold and silver, we covet the things of this world that distract us from God.

The defeat at Ai represents the flesh. Jesus said, "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40-42). Since the children of Israel did not take Ai seriously, they were defeated at Ai. It was not until they respected the threat of Ai that they were able to conquer their enemy. In the same way, we often underestimate what the Bible calls our flesh. The Spirit can overcome the flesh when we realize that our human nature unaided by God is a serious threat to our faith. Never underestimate the impact your flesh can have on your walk of faith!

The Gibeonites made their treaty by tricking the Israelites. The devil works in the same way. In a great hymn, Martin Luther wrote of Satan, "His craft and power are great." The devil is an angel of light. (II Corinthians 11:14). He does not cause us to fall by tempting us to do something terrible. He usually comes to us in the form of something very lovely, something very beautiful. If God is calling you to be a medical missionary, the devil will not tempt you to go out and rob banks. He will tempt you to be a good medical doctor in your own country. If God wants us to be a medical missionary, that is God's best plan for us. Satan works to get us to do a good thing instead of the best thing. That is why some say the greatest enemy of the best is the good. Joshua chapters six through nine give us a picture of these three enemies of our faith: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In the rest of the Book of Joshua, you find more allegories that profile faith for us. The life of Joshua, and another man who is mentioned with Joshua, give us "A Positive Profile of

Faith." One of the great men of faith in the Bible is Caleb. He was that other spy who brought back a good report along with Joshua. Caleb never lost his vision. The whole time they were wandering in the wilderness watching people griping and dying of thirst, Caleb kept thinking about the grapes he had seen when he and Joshua were spies in the city of Hebron.

The other ten spies were experts in "giantology" - focusing on the difficulties, or the giants, as we said when we studied the Book of Numbers. Caleb did see the giants, but he knew his God was bigger than those giants. When they got into the Land of Canaan, Caleb conquered and possessed the city of Hebron, which was the city promised to him by Moses.

There is also "A Negative Profile of Faith" in the Book of Joshua. In addition to those ten spies who clearly lacked faith, the fact that the children of Israel failed to conquer all the nations of Canaan as God had ordered them to do, presents a negative profile of faith. If they had carried out God's plan, we would not read in the next book of the Bible that they were enslaved seven times by those nations they failed to conquer.

The last picture of faith that we find in the Book of Joshua might be called "A Verdict of Faith." Joshua challenged his people to seal their faith by making a covenant with God. Setting the example, He said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Joshua sealed his faith with a covenant. He made it known that he and his house would put God first and serve God. When Joshua challenged his people to join him in making that kind of covenant, they did, saying, "We choose to serve God and put Him first." Joshua went on record saying, "God bear witness to this and you bear witness to this. You made a covenant today that you are putting God first and you want to choose to serve God" (Joshua 24:14-16).

The Book of Joshua concludes with Joshua charging the people of God just as Moses did at the end of the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Moses and Joshua challenge us to bring the issues of faith to a verdict by making the commitment to put God first in our lives.

Have you ever brought the issues of faith to a verdict and made a serious commitment of faith to God? Have you ever resolved in your heart that you and your family will put God first and serve the one and only true God? Add together the many profiles of faith in this inspired history book of the Old Testament. Carefully reflect on the way this book about faith concludes. Then, let the Holy Spirit move you to make a commitment and establish a covenant of the caliber of faith you have seen profiled in the Book of Joshua.