

# **DEUTERONOMY**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **VERSES 1-4**

These verses deal with the choices presented to two generations of Israelites. For each it would come down to their willingness to obey. The choices they would make would be determined by how they would deal with the events of the past that formed their attitudes and behavior. It is important for us to be aware of, but not dominated by, the effects of the past influences in our lives and how they have positively or negatively molded us over time. As the nation of Israel camped at the entrance of the land of Canaan, Moses began an assessment of God's past interaction with them and His expectations of them in the next phase of their journey. The first five chapters of Deuteronomy is a condensed review of their history from Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai), where they received the law, to the present time when soon they would begin their conquest of the Promised Land. If Israel had been in perfect accord with the leading of the Spirit, the journey to the southern border of the Promised Land would have been short. Although it would take a caravan only eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea, it had taken Israel over 38 years to reach the border of Canaan. The crossing was lengthened considerably because of their disobedience. Disobedience is an interference with the plan of God; however, it never eliminates it. It may delay the time for the culmination of God's design but it never stops it. The disobedience of Adam and Eve brought about their fall and earth's corruption, but the ending chapters of Revelation reveal that God's original intent for this planet will be achieved. Thus, the quicker the child of God obeys, the sooner spiritual blessings will be poured out upon him in order to achieve the divine will. Moses was preparing to address the offspring of those who had escaped the captivity of Egypt but perished in the wilderness because they failed to trust God's word. This new generation was born in the wilderness of difficulty and raised during the hardship of the journey, but they were battle-tested and ready to accomplish what their parents failed to do. They were ready to do God's will.

The place they received this “second law” is described as being in the Arabah (desert) and between Paran (ornamental – beautify), Tophel (quagmire – unsavory), Laban (white – becoming white), Hazeroth (villages – enclosed as a yard or sheepfold) and Dizahab (having gold). These were not localities near the Israelite encampment but specific places encountered during the wilderness experience. However, they bring to mind the choices that faced Israel as they prepared to conquer Canaan. The nation once again was given the opportunity to begin the next phase of their experience and the names of these places describe their options at this moment. On one hand are the positives – beauty, purity, security and prosperity. The other choice was to remain in wilderness and in the quagmire and unsavoriness of the consequences of a life of rebellion. When confronted with the same choices 40 years previous the older generation chose to reject confidence in God and succumbed to their slavery mentality. Even though this current generation had been born and raised in the wilderness, they were born free from the mental bondage that afflicted their parents. They would choose to trust in the Lord and go forward.

Every person stands in the same place. The desire to remain with the known is very strong; even when the known is not beneficial. On the other side of Jordan is the promise with all its blessings. Yet, the circumstances and responsibilities surrounding those blessings are intimidating. This is why we are told in Rom. 12:1,2 to have a renewed mind. It takes a liberated mind to be capable of accepting God’s promises with all attending uncertainties and then lay aside the past experiences and the coping methods with which we have become comfortable. The previous generation had all that the present generation possessed and much more. They had personally witnessed the victorious power of God against the might of Egypt from the ten plagues to the drowning of Pharaoh’s army. Yet they could not overcome the mindset of slavery that had been ingrained in them through their past experiences. Only a mind renewed by the Holy Spirit can discern the good, acceptable and perfect will of God and then enact it. That mind enables the saint to be all God desires him to be and to achieve all the plans He has for him to accomplish.

### **VERSES 5-8**

Verses 5-18 deal with the importance of recognizing goals, boundaries and organization and how each one interconnects with the others. However, the key that starts everything else in motion is moving at the perfect moment. After giving the Law to Moses on Mount Horeb the Lord declared it was time for the Israelites to go forward. They had received all they were going to get in this spot. There is a divinely-appointed time for all things. To try to move ahead of Holy Spirit is folly and to lag behind is detrimental. The nation had the promise of their future (calling) and they had their divinely established boundaries (gifts). These would never be changed or compromised (Rom. 11:28,29). It was why God called them out of bondage. All that was left was to be put in the place where God could use them. This is where their fathers had failed. It would soon be their turn to choose.

With the command to start came the reminder of their purpose. Many times Christians want the whole scenario, start to finish, set out before them. Then, when God does not comply with their wishes, they make it up. However, the Lord seldom reveals the complete road map but He does give the starting point, the next step and the destination. The life of Joseph is an excellent example of this (Genesis: chapters 37,39-50). His immediate steps were dictated by circumstances, not planning. However, they were all orchestrated by God to bring about the salvation of his family. Jesus also illustrated this truth on His last day on earth (Acts 1:4-9). He gave His disciples their starting point (Jerusalem), their next step (tarry until you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit) and their destination (you shall be my witnesses). As far as we know this is the only information they had; thus the need for obedience. God did the same thing to Israel. Mt. Horeb was their starting point, the next phase of their journey was to the land of the Amorites and their goal was Canaan.

This objective came with boundaries and responsibilities. They were not given the whole Middle East region – just the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates River. They were not to become a world empire but a world influence. All believers have limitations that are established by God for their ministry. Trying to go beyond these confines is to invite the corruption of that calling. The saint must not get caught in the web of ‘I must do as much as I can for Christ.’ No doubt, his best effort is required for his ministry but he must also understand

that, in order to assume a position not prepared for him, he must operate in his own power and with his own resources. These boundaries are designed to keep the believer from undue physical stress or mental anxiety. The Christian life is to be a joy-filled adventure. It is difficult to rejoice under the pressure of unmet expectations. Leaders must remember that it is the kingdom of God, not his. We are designed to be only one part of the body of Christ, thus we are not called to do it all.

### **VERSES 9-18**

As there are ministerial boundaries so there are personal limitations. It is important to realize and accept human boundaries. Moses was trying to do too much and the people were happy to let him do it. As such, he was becoming tired and overly stressed. Frustration was the result and he felt isolated and confused. Overextending one's energies invites burnout and burnout leads to a diminishing relationship with God; the person simply becomes too busy or too distracted to keep a proper balance between personal and ministerial responsibilities. Something has to give and it is usually humility or sexual purity.

Overextension is not an excuse for quitting. It was Moses' desire that Israel increase greatly. It would take a great nation, operating in God's promised blessings, to achieve His purpose. But he had to find a solution to administrating the governmental needs of the nation or he would not be able to cope with his duties. The answer was for Moses to share the load by assigning leaders to certain obligations. Organization is not the enemy of the move of the Holy Spirit nor is it the cause of coldness in the body of Christ. The early church organized itself in anticipation of the "promise of the Father" ([Acts 1:15-26](#)). They did so in expectation of what God was going to do. Thus, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost they were ready for the sudden explosive growth of souls. They further added to that organization when busyness began to threaten ministry ([Acts 6:1-6](#)). Without that willingness to adjust organizationally the ministry of the Word, which is the life's blood of the church, would have been swallowed up by the ego-centric wants of the congregation. Organization is about thinking ahead and dealing with potential problems before they arise. The lack of organization means the minister must expend unnecessary strength and energy ([Ecc. 10:10](#)). It is essential to be

surrounded by positive and willing people. The men Moses chose were trustworthy, wise, discerning and experienced. Their assignments were to be neither political offices nor places for novices. Each leader was given an area of responsibility; some less and some more but all were accountable to him. They were not to exceed their authority but to respect the position of other appointed leaders, especially those who were above them in the organizational structure. They were not to usurp authority but to contribute and cooperate.

Effective Christian leadership is nondiscriminatory. In a disagreement, who the party is or what position he may hold is never to be a factor in decision making. Moses instructed the new leaders, as those who foremost were to be divine representatives, not to fear man but to judge righteously and show no partiality. A Spirit-filled leader must strive to determine a matter according to God's will and leave the outcome to Him. They are also to stay within the realm of their expertise and experience. If a matter is too difficult for them they are not to guess at the solution but seek the counsel of those in authority over them.

### **VERSES 19-25**

These verses show a difference between preparation and planning. God always prepares His people before revealing the details of His plan. Man wants to plan things and then begin the preparation. The two Israeli generations illustrate the contrast and consequences of both courses of action. Between Horeb and Canaan was the wilderness of Paran. Paran means 'ornamental' and is from the root word meaning 'to embellish.' This is seemingly a contradiction because seldom is a desert considered something that adds beauty. However, this is exactly the reason why the Lord sends us into the wilderness. The Lord often takes His child into a place of discomfort in order to beautify their lives (Hos. 2:14,15; Isa. 45:3). It is in those solitary occasions that He reestablishes relationship with the one who has been drifting away because of personal distractions. When the Holy Spirit leads the saint into areas that seem destitute of life he is actually bringing forth beauty in him in order to produce fruit through them (Lk. 4:1,2,14). It is God's way of creating in us what He wants to create through us.

For Israel the purpose of this part of the journey was two-fold. First, it was to serve as a preparatory experience. Here they were to be changed from slaves to warriors. Yet, it was during this time they met each adversity with complaining and rebellion (Numbers chapters 11 and 12). Instead of maturing in faith they digressed further into fear. Thus, when they arrived at Canaan, the ultimate purpose for their deliverance, they were not ready to take the necessary bold actions. If we do not take advantage of the preparation then any ensuing action will result in failure. Therefore, preparation is far more important than the endeavor; there is no substitute for it. Without it, effort will not take place or be completely effective. Too often the desert experience is wasted because of complaining and fault-finding rather than submitting to God's purpose for the circumstance. Failure will soon become a habit if we refuse to see adversity as opportunity. Complaining about fairness focuses on the human component of the situation; walking in faith focuses on the divine motivation for it.

The second purpose was to compare what they were presently living in to what was promised by God. The desert was so terrible and overwhelming it should have motivated the Israelites to avoid a return to it at all costs. However, their fear and subsequent obstinacy blinded them to the fact that they only had two choices – the Promised Land or the desert. At this point in their lives there were no other options available. God allows the bleakness of the wilderness in our lives so we will not desire it when challenged to walk by faith. It should serve to compare God's purpose to the consequence of rebellion. Faith requires that we walk, not by sight, but by promise. The desert experience is a reality that should convince us to reject what is for that which is to come. We may not be able to look into the future but we sure can back over the past. Now we have to choose where we will live.

The leadership of the people decided they first needed a plan so they came up with the idea to spy out the land before entering it. On the surface that made sense and even Moses approved of it. The question remains, however, did the Israelites suggest it out of anxiety or anticipation? It is always good to know what we are up against before launching an endeavor. However, if planning is used as a stalling tactic then it only postpones the eventual failure. God had already promised the land to Israel; it was theirs for the taking. Only discouragement and

fear would stand in the way and these were the things the desert experience was to have eliminated. If Israel could have conquered them they could have conquered it all.

Moses chose twelve leaders and commissioned them to bring back a report. Their primary mission was to determine the best route of attack and identify the cities of strategic importance. In the course of their journey they were also to determine the might of the opposition and the value of the conquest (Num. 13:16-20). Israel wanted to know the strength of the enemy and how fortified the cities were. They also sought to discover if the reality of the land was as good as its reputation. When they returned they brought with them some of the local produce and described the land that God was about to give them as worth the effort to possess it. If they had stopped there all would have been well. But they could not help seeing the difficult as the impossible. Here is where putting planning ahead of preparation becomes detrimental to the temperament of the people. Faith becomes a challenge when it conflicts with the human nature to plan things. It is important to be realistic about things but is more important to trust God's Word. If the land is good and He has promised it to us then everything else will be alright. It just becomes a matter of obedience and courage.

### **VERSES 26-33**

The response of the people to the report of the spies revealed the genuine quality of their hearts. Because they failed to trust the Lord they became victims to their own innate anxiety. Therefore, the entire purpose for the wilderness lost its designed effect. Their immediate reaction was more than natural fear; they were terrified. They may have had the best intentions in the world but they did not have the will. The slave impulse in them was too strong; the persistent and lingering effects of yesterday held complete sway over the promise of tomorrow. Instead of warriors they became grumblers. Instead of becoming a victorious army they became a mob of rebels. This alone doomed any subsequent action to failure. Verse 27 says, "And you grumbled in your tents and said ...". This statement reveals how the people began to sow seeds of discord through private conversations. The negative reaction was not immediate but came about as they began to express their fears to each other and no one (except Joshua and Caleb)

was willing to declare hope in God's promise. These subterranean conversations eventually took on a life of their own and came to the surface in the form of accusation and insurrection.

The accommodator of all fear is blame. Making it someone else's fault justifies disobedience and rebellion. The people of Israel first blamed God for their behavior, "Because the Lord hates us." Their response was, "It is not my fault but God's. He made me like I am and now He is punishing me for it." God did not take Israel out of Egypt for defeat, but for victory. They just found His course of action not their liking. Since the Lord did not do it according to their imaginations then they were free to reject all of God's purpose for them. Then blame was placed on the spies. They were at fault because their report made the people afraid. The description they gave was as accurate as a human could make it. The cities were formidable and the adversaries were gigantic. However, no one except Joshua and Caleb connected the promises of God with the future. The spies reacted solely to what they saw and the people reacted solely to what they heard. They may have justified their reaction with human logic but it would not be logic that would conquer Canaan; it would be the power of God.

How did the Lord carry the nation of Israel? He provided manna on a day-to-day basis and on at least two occasions provided quail when they desired meat. When the water was undrinkable He made it sweet and when it was nonexistent He brought it forth from a rock. When the Israelites faced formidable attacking armies He gave them the victory. He did all this in the first 2½ months of the journey. The miraculous had been a daily experience for two years. They had no reason not to believe that the provision of Jehovah-Jireh was good for the next phase of the journey. The ultimate truth of the matter was they only had themselves to blame. Moses reminded them of their history. God had destroyed the might of Egypt without them having to raise a hand. They saw His provision everyday even though they often took it for granted. They experienced His presence and were reminded of His guidance every time they saw the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Yet, despite all this, they did not trust Him with their future.

Every challenge initially seems impossible; that is what makes it a challenge. Every challenge comes with its own set of excuses not to take it on; having those options is what makes

it difficult. Overcoming seemingly impossible circumstances requires spiritual strength. To succeed we must acknowledge by faith that God has prepared us for this opportunity to glorify Him. Overcoming excuses requires supernatural determination. The mindset mired in the past can never meet the demands of the present with anticipation toward the future. Facing the unknown requires divine hope and that kind of hope is the attitude of the warrior. No soldier goes into a battle expecting to lose or, at the very least, gaining something for his nation. This confident expectation of a positive outcome enables him to make the necessary sacrifices. He deems the goal worthy of what is required to achieve it.

The most important thing to remember in a challenging situation is the power and concern of the heavenly Father. Moses reminded Israel that as God is faithful with His presence so He would be with His power. He was not going to change now; He had too much invested in them. If we declare that God's presence dwells within us then we must also declare that the Almighty will accompany us through any adversity. This is the powerful message of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. In both the good and bad Jesus is there. In overwhelming desolation or in the midst of great abundance His is still the faithful Good Shepherd. This assurance automatically makes every enemy a defeated foe. Thus, for those who believe in His promises, there is no reason for fear and anxiety. His past actions give surety of His future ones. This is the special care He has for us. The real failure in life is not the inevitable setbacks we will experience during the journey but the refusal to trust the Lord as our God.

### **VERSES 34-40**

These verses illustrate the necessity of responding to preparation. If we are not ready when the moment of truth arrives then the hidden truth we have tried to hide will reveal itself. This is what happened to the first generation of freed Israelites. God was angry at their reaction to the report of the spies. They allowed fear to make the decision and now they would suffer the consequences of that resolution. God called them an evil generation and refused to allow them to enter the Promised Land. We can be sure that they did not think of themselves as evil; just pragmatic. They looked at the situation with human reasoning and formed their conclusions

accordingly. Thus, they were guilty of walking by sight and not by faith and Scripture says that whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23) and all sin is evil in the sight of God.

This people who knew such a great deliverance now found their entire experience wasted. They would not obtain what God had declared they could have. The only exceptions would be Caleb and Joshua. These men had proved their faith twice over. First, they had traversed the land, saw its possibilities and trusted God for conquest. Secondly, they went against popular opinion and declared what the people did not want to hear, even at the peril of being stoned by the rebellious mob (Num. 14:6-10). In spite of the prevalent fear that filled those that surrounded them they held to their confidence that God was able to do that which He promised.

In verses 36 and 39 God contrasted the legacies of Caleb and unfaithful Israel. The people grumbled about how their children would suffer at the hands of the armies of Canaan. They said that their families would become prey. What they saw as devastation for their offspring Caleb saw as opportunity. In response to this attitude God promised his heirs an inheritance. He would have the honor of being part of his sons' lives as they conquered their portion of the Promised Land. The children of everyone else would be the ones who would conquer the land. There would be no involvement in their success and no legacy of honor for this faithless generation. Those who flinched in the face of fear would bear the disgrace of cowardice.

Moses would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land with the people of Israel as well. He would lead them to the western shore of the Jordan but it would be Joshua who would lead them across for the conquest. Moses was prohibited because of his disregard for the Lord's command when trying to meet the people's demand for water (Num. 20:2-13). The people were angry at Moses because of their situation. They could ignore their own culpability for their circumstances for they had Moses and Aaron to blame it on. God told Moses to take his staff and assemble the people before the rock. Then he was to command the rock to bring forth water. However, Moses probably allowed his temper to get the best of him and declared, "Shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?" Then, instead of speaking to the rock, he struck it twice. Though God honored Moses publicly by bringing water from the rock He also held him

accountable for his disobedience. Moses' first big mistake was telling Israel that Aaron and he were going to do this miracle. His second mistake was doing it the way he had done it before and not the way God had instructed. These errors had sad consequences. God told him he was guilty of two things: he did not believe His command and he did not treat Him as holy before the people. The Lord puts a much greater emphasis on obedience to His Word than people normally do. We tend to treat submission to it as optional. Jesus expressed the importance of this by making part of the prayer He taught His disciples when He said, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). To consider the will of God to be subject to compromise is to switch the order of the prayer to read, "My will be done in heaven as it is on earth." This attitude insults the holiness of God and publicly demotes Him to subhuman status. To believe God's Word is to obey His Word and obedience to His will exalts Him above all circumstances or popular opinion. It sets Him apart from the natural and establishes Him as the divine authority.

It was a tragic price to pay for a mistake but God's purposes for every situation must be honored. Though Moses did not realize it, there were greater implications in the situation than just bringing water to a thirsty and grumbling multitude. The first rock Moses struck was a type of the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 4:10-12). The rock was only to be struck once because Jesus died once for all. As striking the earthly rock brought refreshing to Israel so the striking of the eternal Rock released healing and atonement. His sacrifice was sufficient for all the needs of mankind. When God told Moses to speak to the rock He was illustrating to future generations the importance of a personal prayer life. Through the law the Lord had already established the priesthood of Jesus and His responsibilities of intercession. Now He was showing the essence of grace in that Christ was there to answer their petitions and meet their most essential need.

It would now be Moses responsibility to pass the mantle of leadership to Joshua, who would lead the warrior generation into Canaan. As the elder minister he was to encourage his successor. There is a season for all things, including ministry. Part of the duty of leadership is the preparation of future church leaders. This must have been a bitter pill for Moses to swallow. He had surrendered much for the kingdom of God. The last forty years of his life were the most challenging. And now, on the threshold of his life's ambition, he is being told to give his

position to another. This requires true humility and that is one quality the desert experience had given him (Num. 12:1-8). He had learned to surrender and trust his future to his Lord. So, Moses would do as the Almighty commanded and made sure that, both publicly and privately, Joshua was ready to assume the mantle of authority when the time was right.

Finally, God told the congregation to turn around and head back into the wilderness toward the Red Sea. They would live in the consequence of rebellion for the next 38 years. They were to go back to square one and start over. This would be for the benefit of their children; their opportunity for greatness had past. It would be their destiny to live out a life of what could have been. They would have conditional respect from their families because they were to blame for the next four decades of poverty and depravation. However, the plan of God would not be defeated; it would only be delayed until those who desired to do the His will and had the courage to fulfill those intentions take their place. The Lord had promised the land of Canaan to His friend Abraham and his descendants and that oath would be kept.

### **VERSES 41-46**

It was too late for this generation. Though they acted repentant what they did next revealed that they had not really changed. Repentance is acknowledging error and taking the necessary measures to correct one's behavior. Israel did not do this but continued to put their will above the necessity of obedience to God. They would not accept God's judgment so they decided to go it on their own. They were attempting to atone for their sins through works. This always leads to complete disaster. They thought if they said the right words then the Lord would change His mind and follow their lead. Then everything would be alright. That kind of reasoning reveals the attitude of a person who thinks he can manipulate the Almighty. The core of their problem emanated from their arrogance. They presumptuously decided that they controlled the deployment of the promises of God. They did not understand that the promise of God is subject to the will of God and the will of God is only accomplished through the complete obedience of His people. They determined that all they had to do was strap on the sword and the Lord would have to give them the victory. They thought it would be easy because they were His

chosen people. What they did not understand was that heavenly Father was blessing them because of His promise to Abraham, not because they were somebody special.

Despite Moses' warning, they proceeded according to their own designs. They assumed the Almighty would honor their decision. However, neither Moses (their spiritual leadership) nor the Ark of the Covenant (the symbol of God's presence) went with them. Though Scripture does not specifically say it, their two best military leaders, Joshua and Caleb, would not be involved in this folly either. Like much of humanity, they felt they did not need the Lord to achieve their objectives. The battle quickly taught them that wrong they were. They were not only defeated; they were utterly routed.

Even after they returned to Kadesh-Barnea and wept bitterly before Him God still did not change His mind. Unfortunately, there is a time when it is too late for an individual to repent, even though he is genuinely grieved by his actions ([Heb. 12:15-17](#)). He may still be saved but the full life Christ has set out before him and its accompanying blessings have been lost. From this point on, second best is the most he can hope for. This is the place Israel found itself. They had reached the point of no return; their window of opportunity had closed. They were destined to die in the wilderness because of their arrogance and disobedience.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **VERSES 1-23**

When the 38 years of wandering was complete, it was time for Israel to move toward the ultimate goal of the conquest of Canaan. The days of living in the wilderness were now coming to an end. Between them and the Promised Land were three territories that they were forbidden to attack: Edom (Seir), Moab and Ammon. Because of their family association with Abraham God enabled these nations to conquer their lands and defeat their giants; thus, Israel was not allowed to possess what the Lord had given to them. One of the first things this new generation of Israelites had to learn was keeping God's blessing in proper perspective. They had grown up in the unique situation of daily miracles. This would make it easy to take them for granted or to presume they were somebody special because of them. Any blessing or action the Lord gives His children is for a divine purpose, not for self-aggrandizement. The reputation of the Israelites severely frightened the people of Edom, who were descendants of Jacob's brother Esau, but they were not to take advantage of that terror. The dread the kinsmen of Jacob would undergo was not because of Israel's military prowess; it was from the Lord. This would keep them from attacking Israel so the nation would be able to continue on their course of conquest unhindered. Thus, the purpose of their fear was for Israel's safety, not to bolster their ego. They were not to provoke their kinsmen with military action or respond to any threat of violence but were to be careful to treat them fairly and with respect. If they needed food or water they were to pay for it. God had watched over them for forty years. Therefore, they were to be satisfied with the daily blessings of the Lord and not covet His goodness to others. He was their Provider and they had not lacked anything. The child of God does not need to fret when surrounded by the things that would do harm. The Psalmist described this experience when he declared, "Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (Ps. 23:5a). Israel was not to allow fear to produce an adverse reaction. Thus, they were able to treat Moab and Ammon with respect because they were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot.

The ultimate focus of the people of Israel was to be the land of Canaan. As previously stated, they were not to be a political power in the world but a major spiritual influence to it.

They were not to be interested in the possessions of the surrounding nations. Those lands were designated for someone else. To concern themselves with the things not set apart for them would be a disaster. The mature Christian must learn to focus on his role in the kingdom. It is easy to succumb to the temptation of trying to be all things to all people. While this may satisfy the ego, in reality it serves as a hindrance to the overall well-being of the kingdom of God. People who try to do things outside their calling eventually become the center of attention. The next step will be succumbing to the pressure to keep up appearances while the integrity of the initial anointing suffers. Soon, the minister is involved in areas beyond God's original intention, which means he is now operating with human might instead of divine power. He has become distracted and the lack of focus is a major deterrent to spiritual victory because it creates a spiritual blind spot. Israel was not to expend time or manpower dealing with that which was relatively inconsequential to their mission. Edom and Moab refused Israel permission to enter their territory and Edom even brought out their army to oppose them but even that arrogance was not to distract them from their objective. The child of God who has a clear view of the spiritual purpose for his life will refuse to accept anything less and will not bother with anything else.

In the midst of Moses' instruction concerning Israel and their kinsmen he interjects two lessons from the past to admonish those preparing to do battle in Canaan (vss. 10-18). In so doing, he reminds them of their immediate future and what it had taken to get them to this point. The first truth emphasized the necessity of proper perspective when it comes to needless concerns. Too often Christians become more disturbed about perceived threats than real ones. When the threat of peril becomes more of a reality than the reality itself anxiety becomes a hindrance to the efforts of the individual. Moses wanted Israel to know, that long before they had arrived, the Lord had already gone before them; therefore, they could face the present moment with confidence. Giants had once populated the place where the nations of Moab and Ammon now lived. The Moabites called them Emim (vss. 10,11) while the Ammonites called them Zamzummin (vss. 20-22). These obstacles were confronted and conquered by God in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham and honor his faithfulness. The meanings of their names (Emim – terror; Zamzummin – perplexing) could be troubling to the relatively untested army unless it is recalled that those giants were already defeated by someone else in accordance to the

Word and power of God. Though believers should not want to live in the past it is always good to recognize what the Lord has already done in preparation to bring them to this moment of challenge and victory. It is easy to fall into the trap of fretting over a defeated foe. When we forget that Jesus has already conquered the enemy of men's souls, we begin to devise an extraneous plan of attack rather than going forward to our assigned territory. For Israel, there would be times when strategy would be important but that would occur once they crossed the Jordan. Until then they were to just go forward. The Anakim are the giants who lived in Canaan and eventually they would be conquered by Caleb and his sons but that would be for another place and another day. There will be giants to be faced in the place God has set out for us but they will be opportunities put there by our heavenly Father for our benefit and for His glory.

The second statement reminded them of their recent past. What they had learned was the necessity of preparation, no matter how uncomfortable it might be personally or how long it would take to make the person effective. In verses 13-18, the nation was told to cross over the brook of Zered. Zered means "to be exuberant in growth or lined with shrubbery." Coupled with the revelation that all the previous generation of the faithless men of war had died off, the crossing of the brook takes on a significant meaning. One of the best techniques for growth is pruning. The removal of dying or unproductive branches is essential to the full and fruitful growth of the plant. As this is true in agriculture, so it is true in spiritual maturity. For Israel, those who were captivated by fear and consumed by self-doubt had to be removed from the scene before the army could have the emotional and mental capability to face the challenges of war. Verse 15 says, "Moreover the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from within the camp until they all perished." It was God's purpose to purge the enemy within the camp before He dealt with the enemy without. Cancer thrives by killing healthy cells within the body. Fear does the same thing in people; it cannot be silent. It is contagious and seeks to spread its death to other individuals or throughout a congregation because it is interconnected with human pride. Since ego cannot cope with the humiliation of cowardice, it must try to make fear the normal or the logical. Thus, it is spread from person to person with the outcome of infecting all with unbelief. Now nothing positive or powerful can be accomplished because nothing difficult will be attempted. Like a malignant tumor, the only way to deal with fear is to

extricate it from the body. This is what God had to do in Israel if they were going to have the determination and heart to conquer the Promised Land. Many times we must be pruned of the energy-sapping habits and attitudes of self before we can be triumphant warriors for God. Surely, it must have been difficult for the children to watch their parents die in the wilderness knowing all the while it was because of their foolishness and failure. However, it had to happen before they could attempt what the previous generation thought to be impossible. In the same way, it is hard for us to lose what we think to be indispensable in order to be fully what God wants us to be or achieve all that He wants us to accomplish. What emerges is a person who neither fears the unknown nor refuses to believe that God is not able to accomplish His promises.

In response to Moab and Edom's lack of cooperation Israel stayed just outside of Edom's western border as they journeyed northward to Canaan. Then they split Edom's northern border with Moab as they proceeded toward the eastern edge of Moab. Finally they turned north toward the Jordan River and Jericho. However, there would loom two more adversities before them before they could cross the Jordan into Palestine. How they would meet those challenges would go a long way in determining how they would be defined as a nation.

### **VERSES 24,25**

It was time! The command came for Israel to arise and set out on the final leg of their journey. There would be no more wandering about in the desert; the moment of conquest was almost at hand. Though they may not have understood it at the time, the events of the next few weeks were going to have an enormous and long-lasting impact on their mission to conquer Canaan. They were told to pass through the valley (wadi) of Arnon. Soon they would have to confront King Sihon and his Amorite army. This battle (and the one to follow with King Og) would break the confidence of their Canaanite enemies. Thus, the fear that had prevented Israel from entering the Promised Land in the past would now be experienced by those who would oppose them. However, all these events lay in the future. For now, they were commanded to go forward; it was the first time they had heard those words in almost four decades. Since this would be a time of anticipation and excitement it is significant that the name of the valley they would initially pass through means 'to shout' (for joy).

Only when the children of God know liberty from fear are they able to experience the fullness of joy. David revealed the source of his comfort when faced with feelings of anxiety (Ps. 16:1,7-11). He focused on God's Word and found refuge in the confidence of dwelling in the presence of the Lord. He maintained absolute trust in his Savior's faithfulness and, thus, knew with full certainty that his Father was in full control. The circumstances of life might be uncertain and the possibility of catastrophe is present all around but the child of God can feel the full joy and complete security found in the company of the Holy Spirit. In this sanctuary fear cannot exist because divine love is perfect (1 Jn. 4:18,19). Being in the center of the will of God inspires joy in the believer. This is the time when the plan of God and the heart of man are in perfect alignment. This is the time when fear no longer clouds the thinking; the saint has placed his full trust in the power of the Almighty. The purpose of confusion is the defeat of reason. When fear arises, the temptation to panic or become discouraged sets in and, unless faith is powerful enough to control that anxiety, it will overwhelm the saint's reliance upon the Word of God and defeat his ability to resist it. This is what happened to the generation of failure. Fear replaced reason in everyone but Joshua and Caleb (Num. 14:1-3,6-10). However, the one whose mind is focused on Christ enjoys perfect peace (Isa. 26:3,4) because he is living by faith in the promise and is accomplishing that for which he has been called for the glory of Jesus. It is a moment of perfect confidence and unity.

The narrative now moves to Israel's conflicts with kings Sihon and Og. These battles are noted several times in the Old Testament as signature moments in the nation's history. Psalms mentions it twice (Ps. 135:10-12; Ps. 136:17-22) and Nehemiah highlights it in his prayer of dedication (Neh. 9:22). In all three cases, these rulers were the only ones specifically named among the defeated Canaanite kings. In fact, these victories may have received even more Biblical recognition than the annihilation of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. One reason for this might be that their conquest had a greater impact upon the nations in the Palestine region. They may have heard about the reputation of Egypt and may have been remotely influenced by them but they were undoubtedly more intimately impacted by the regional power of Amorites. Israel's eventual victory over them would cause terror to fall upon the people of Jericho to the point that their hearts melted in fear (Josh. 2:8-11). Even Rahab knew the thick walls that

surrounded the city would not be enough to stop the invaders. The residents of Gibeon, which was less than 30 miles west of Jericho, also heard how the Lord had empowered Israel to defeat Egypt as well as the Transjordan nations and they devised a scheme to trick Joshua and the leadership into an alliance (Josh. 9:3-5,9,10). This terror drained the fortitude out of their would-be adversaries and courage and confidence is most of the battle in any situation.

Before Israel could be secure in Canaan they had to secure their eastern boundary. The Lord had told them to leave Edom, Moab and Ammon alone. That pretty much took care of the southeastern part of the border. However, the kingdoms of Sihon and Og remained a threat. In fact, Sihon had recently defeated the army of Moab and seized the northern part of their territory. They had a well-earned reputation as a redoubtable force in the region. Og was a descendant of the giants who had once heavily populated the area. As such, he would be a constant source of concern. Israel did not need the irritation of constantly looking behind them if they were going to be successful going forward.

Before following the events as they unfold, it is important to go back to the first mention of Sihon and Og, which is found in Deut. 1:3,4. Israel had two major failings that they brought with them from Egypt – fear and sexual immorality. These two weaknesses had to be dealt with because they were conflicts that originated from within and without and, if allowed to fester, would bring spiritual degradation and lead to their destruction as a nation. Fear primarily finds its roots in the inner inadequacies of the human condition. If the power of God is not acknowledged by the Christian and incorporated in his decision-making process he will be paralyzed by anxiety and will be unable to act. This is what occurred to Israel 38 years previous. On the other hand, sexual lust is inflamed by physical stimuli dominating the natural senses. The origin of this life-controlling action is human pride. Lust is about self-gratification and is connected with the desire to dominate or manipulate another person. Where fear is about human inferiorities, lust is about the desire for human superiority. Both are detrimental to the will and work of God but for different reasons. Fear says, “God is not able” and lust says, “The Lord is not my God.” In both circumstances the Master is unable to use the individual for the cause of the kingdom. A deeper examination of the names of the rulers and places where they lived

reveals that, unbeknownst to Israel, they were confronting those failings by confronting Sihon and Og. It would be only after both these adversaries were conquered that Moses would be able to declare the divine permission for them to enter the Promised Land.

Sihon is depicted as the king of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon. By investigating the meaning of these names a picture emerges. Sihon means tempestuous, Heshbon means contrivance or fabrication and Amorite means prominence. When the chaotic finds a place to dwell in an atmosphere conducive to deception then fear gains control over an individual. When faced with an adversarial situation people have a tendency to form an opinion about how things should work out. When things do not go according to their plans, confusion ensues and the person becomes frustrated. In the tempestuous situation the lie is conceived. A lie is effective only when there is an element of truth in it. A totally blatant falsehood is summarily rejected by all but the completely gullible. However, if the lie contains a truth that confirms a weakness, fear or failing then it becomes believable and has the potential to do great damage. When the individual is beset by a series of setbacks the confusion and frustration heighten that potential. This happens with such a degree of regularity that society has come up the sayings such as, “Bad news comes in threes,” and, “When it rains, it pours.” These series of storms prevent us from seeing anything but the element of truth within the lie and make it larger and more consequential than what is truly is. In this situation we have difficulty maintaining perspective because the lie is believable and the full and positive truth is hidden. The impact of these successive difficulties is chaos and despair. In this tempest a lie is suggested and believed; it is especially devastating to a person is not established in the supreme truth of the Word of God. Chaos and uncertainty nurtures the seed of deception until it takes on a life of its own and grows exponentially. Now the sorrows gain prominence and become the focus of the person’s life, replacing God’s divine purpose as the center of one’s existence. It is justified by the reasoning that human needs are more important than spiritual ones, which allows the temporal to dominate the eternal. As a result, the lie becomes the reality and the accompanying tumult confirms it. This is what occurred the first time Israel camped at the entrance of Canaan. They thought they were ready to fight until the spies brought back the unexpected unsettling report. The discouraging news caused the hearts of the former slaves to melt because they were unable to trust God for victory

in the situation. In their mind the lie became bigger than the divine truth they were daily living in and they were defeated without fighting a single skirmish. As this new generation of soldiers looked upon a foe with an ominous military reputation coming out to meet them it is certain that the temptation to fear was present. The Amorite army seemed larger than they truly were. The situation may have seemed to be unstable and uncertain. The potential was there to easily fall into the same trap that snared their fathers and believe the lie fear attempts to produce. However, this was a different generation with a different mindset.

### **VERSES 26-31**

The immediate challenge would be the king of Sihon and his Amorite army. This initial battle would determine how Israel would face the possibility of overwhelming fear in their lives. It also gives us an illustration of how we can face our greatest fears and overcome them. The first thing we need to understand is the intricate role intimidation plays when it comes to confronting fear. When Israel met Sihon Moses first tried to negotiate with him but the king refused his offer because he was confident he could defeat these refugees from Egypt. He had recently expanded his domain by defeating the Moabites who had conquered the territory previously occupied by giants. Therefore, he was certain he could crush the Israelites and make them his servants. Adversity causes intimidation because it is confident of acquiring or maintaining control. To overcome fear the individual must recognize that Satan's desire is to control him. Jesus came to set the captive free but the path of liberty always leads through confrontation with the things that would make slaves of us ([Jn. 8:31-36](#)). The Jews in Jesus' day had refused to confront the truth. When they declared they had never been slaves to anyone they were ignoring the chains of Egypt and Babylon. Even as they boasted of their freedom they were under the authority of Rome.

Sihon, however, was not willing to let Israel pass through. Most kinds of fear are seldom beneficial for the believer and life-controlling fear never is. Thus, the Lord orchestrates things so it will be confronted and defeated. When this happens proper spiritual perspective for the Christian becomes imperative. He must hear from God what Moses heard, "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to occupy that you may possess his land." Though

it may not seem like it at the time, fear has just initiated its own demise because it is coming out of the environment of confusion and frustration in which it best flourishes. Fear does its best work in the shadows of the human heart and mind. The Lord does not desire it to be accommodated; He wants it exposed and eradicated. The only way to do that is to bring it into the open. Sihon living in Heshbon can be interpreted a lie living in a tempest. The only way to deal with the deception is to bring it out from the chaos so it can be exposed.

When fear adheres to an individual it becomes a lifestyle. Once it becomes part of our nature we adjust to it and make it part of our mindset. We learn to coexist with it by avoiding things that disturb it. It becomes so much a part of us that only ordeal will bring it to light. When the storm rages, the lie is the eye of it and drives it so that it distresses the person in the same manner a hurricane motivates an ocean-side community to take defensive precautions. Because it is seemingly normal in nature there are no second thoughts given to confronting it aggressively. Like the earthly storm, the tempest is allowed to run its natural course and then we strive to reestablish our lives. But, like the hurricane-ravaged town, there is always collateral and sometimes irreversible damage. To achieve liberty the child of God must be willing to allow his loving heavenly Father to bring the lie out of the confusion so it can be seen for what it is. Once we know the truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit ([Jn. 16:13](#)) then we are neither no longer in dread of the deception nor terrified of the tempest. We will understand that confrontation is only a part of the life-giving process.

Moses sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth (beginnings) to Sihon (tempest) at the city of Heshbon (lie). This is a classic conflict of the old life and the new man. The old existence is filled with the consequences of past deceit and confusion while the new life promotes hope and confidence. To be victorious in this confrontation requires four new attitudes. These mindsets are not available to the unbeliever because they are spiritually birthed and divinely empowered. The first requirement in facing fear is the recognition that we are not the same people we were before Christ came into our hearts. First of all, we are born anew and a divine investment has been made into our lives. Scripture declares, “Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the

flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:16,17). Just as the Israelite army who went against Sihon did not possess the same crippled attitude as their predecessors so the believer needs to possess a different attitude that had constricted him before giving his life to Jesus when it comes to facing adversity. He may not have the experience or maturity that will come later but he does have the knowledge that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him (Phil. 4:11-13). Though he endured a difficult ordeal he has made it a profitable one. The desert trial serves several purposes – among other things, it strengthens, reveals and prioritizes. In this particular case, it eliminated the elements of cowardice that had weakened Israel’s resolve 38 years before. Once someone has undergone the wilderness and has been purged of the things that hinder faith, his ability not to be afraid of difficulty is enhanced. He has been ‘through the washer and the wringer’ and survived. Now those things that create anxiety in the novice are treated as part of normal life situations. Panic ceases to be a major part of the reaction as the warrior looks for a path to victory rather than retreat.

The second necessity in dealing with fear is the willingness to pass through it (not ignore or try to circumvent it). Moses saw that the only way to the Jordan River and the Promised Land was through the territory controlled Sihon. He was done with avoiding conflict. Though he was not looking for a fight, he was not going to avoid one either. It was his desire to pass through peacefully; it would be Sihon’s decision to go to war. For the believer to defeat fear, he must recognize the necessity of going through it. It has to be dealt with or it will remain a constant thorn in his side. Preferably it can be done peacefully but if adversity insists on conflict then the Christian warrior must be willing to step into the arena. Here is where the wasteland experience begins to pay off. The child of God has been forced to endure things he would rather not go through. However, he has fought the battle and has overcome. Now it is easier for the army of Christ to take the next action – a mindset totally foreign to their mentally and emotionally enslaved parents.

The third requisite in the fear-confrontation process is the ability to set the rules. Remember – the power of fear is control. For fear to undo its grip on the heart and mind of the

individual its influence must be loosened. This is the importance of the Word of God in fearful circumstances. The only way to destroy the tentacles fear has spread throughout the heart and mind is to unleash the freedom-producing power of Scripture against it. It is the divine truth of the Savior's love and power that sets people free from the slavery of worry and the lack of confidence. The result is the reversal of master-servant roles as the believer now makes fear bow to him. The one who sets the rules determines the game. Israel did not ask Sihon's permission but told him they were coming through. They were going to stay on the highway that was open to all travelers and had no intentions of invading or troubling the nation. If they needed water or food the Amorites were to provide it at a fair price. They had no plans to cause mischief and obligated themselves to their promises. However, Sihon should make no mistake; Israel was coming through. It was the only route to the Jordan. Fear is defeated when the believer disciplines himself for the task at hand. In these times, it is not wise to look too far down the road or wander down an unfamiliar pathway. He must maintain focus on what it will take to achieve victory over the challenge at hand – not on things that can be dealt with at a later date. He also is to tell fear what the new rules are. In this way, fear must either surrender to him or get ready to do battle. Life-controlling fear cannot be negotiated with; it must either submit to the power of Scripture or it will be eliminated. In any case, the slave will become the master and fear will submit before him.

The final requirement for defeating fear is to make the goal that is reachable now the center of one's attention. Israel was able to accomplish the first three essentials because they had their focus on reaching the western bank of the Jordan River. It should be noted that their stated and immediate goal was not the Promised Land but the Jordan. After they had successfully reached the river then there would be time to recalibrate (this would be done by Joshua after the river was crossed) but for the time being attaining it would be sufficient. Israel had to deal with the challenges outside Canaan before they worried about what was inside it. On the strategic front they had to secure their eastern border so the past would not interfere with their future. On the personal side they had to prove themselves capable of fulfilling the mission at hand before attempting the conquest of Canaan – the ultimate purpose for their deliverance from slavery. From the spiritual aspect they had to confront and conquer the two great enemies that had

overwhelmed their fathers – fear and sexual immorality. The nation would accomplish this by facing Sihon now and Og later. The individual without an objective is one who is subject to every wind of social change or religious doctrine. Without that stability the chances of confusion gaining a foothold grows considerably. Without that clear focus he will be caught up in everything that seems right or convenient at the time, only to find himself not doing what is ultimately best for his spiritual growth. The one who focuses on his immediate mission is the one who accomplishes great things for God.

### **THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD**

Before going to war the Israelite soldier had to equip himself for the conflict. It would be useless to attempt a battle without being ready for it. In Israel's case, the personal armor would be less than the professional soldier but whatever was available had to be used. The Christian warrior must also understand his need of spiritual protection. In order to reverse the influence of wickedness that has built up over time, Eph. 6:10-20 says we must put on the whole armor of God. Before a soldier can go into battle he must be properly equipped. It takes time and training to learn what to put where and in what way it is most beneficial to us. As fear has intertwined and attached to our thoughts and emotions so the Holy Spirit must do the same in order to loosen the grip of anxiety and replace it with assurance and hope. This requires an evolving transformation into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:17,18). To succeed in battle the Christian warrior must have a heavenly vision of things, a love-driven motivation and a faith-driven lifestyle, a sustaining assurance of ultimate victory, a divine covering, the patience to mature over time and the offensive power of God's promises

It is the soldier's responsibility to be equipped for battle (2 Tim. 2:3). He is not to become entangled in the things of this world, such as fear and sexual immorality, which prevent his participation in the confrontation. His sole objective is to please the One who enlisted him and is his superior in rank. Thus, he needs to do what is required to be prepared for the conflict. Without proper equipment and training the soldier is at an utter disadvantage. However, when equipped with the finest and trained by the best he can confidently face any foe. Our struggle is not against things that are recognizable; it is against the unfamiliar and undefined. It takes an

enormous amount of courage just to acknowledge the unknown, much less go into battle against it. By taking full advantage of the protection and weapons Christ provides we learn the nature of the enemy and what tools are necessary and available for victory. Included in this are truth (heavenly vision), righteousness (motivation and action), peace (sustaining assurance), faith (covering), salvation (maturity) and the Word of God (power). We also learn that the ability to defeat the enemy comes through prayer and the power of the Spirit, not through human methods or programs. The origin of fear must be conquered and that can only be accomplished through its total elimination. To try to hide or ignore it will only assure its reappearance at a later and sometimes inconvenient occasion. The only escape out of bondage is through “repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

This armor is not just something the Lord has provided for us; it is the armor He wears and the weapons He uses (Isa. 59:15-21). When God is displeased with the situation He takes measures to correct it. First, He puts on the armor; then He attacks the oppressor. He relies on no earthly power for His own arm produces His salvation and His unique righteousness upholds Him in battle. The result is a reversal of position; the arrogant now are the ones subjected to fear. Verse 21 passes this promise to us. The presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God will be the constant companion of the believer and the determining authority in the conflict. Although Paul was in chains when he wrote this, it was his desire and intention to persevere in the proclamation of the mystery of the gospel to whoever was in earshot. He knew the essence of spiritual warfare was not physical and the battle was not limited to visible circumstances. That is why he told the Ephesians in verses 18 and 19 to take the spiritual view by covering everything they do with prayer and to intercede according to the leadership of the Spirit. This would enable them to be on the alert and remain faithful while supporting others who were with them in the undertaking.

### **GIRDED WITH TRUTH – HEAVENLY VISION**

Paul begins his description of the divine armor with the belt. In this verse “having girded your loins with truth” it is not the girdle used in normal scriptural context. Usually girding up one’s loins means to take the loose flowing garment of everyday wear and tuck it into the waist

sash to allow for ease of movement. Paul used this statement in a military framework because soldiers never entered into battle with clothing that would hamper their agility. This leather belt served the purpose of being a place where things are attached. Consequently, this item would seem to be the least important and certainly the least intimidating. It is doubtful that any soldier has ever refused to enter a conflict because he was afraid of the foe's belt. Though it may give the impression of insignificance, the belt had two very important functions. The first was to provide a strategic place for the sword to attach. Thus, it would be at the ready when needed. The second purpose was to be part of the protection for the most sensitive part of a man's body. Leather or metal strips that reached to the mid-thigh would hang from the belt and provide necessary protection when the soldier was involved in close combat.

Truth can only be truth when it is applicable to every situation. Everything else is opinion or situational ethics. Lives that are founded on truth are lives that have divine vision. This prevents wandering or diversion from the eternal purpose of one's existence. Truth sustains in the bad times and energizes in the good. In Acts 26:15-20, Paul declared his heavenly vision to King Agrippa. He was appointed a minister and witness to the Gentiles to turn them from the darkness of Satan to the light of Christ so they could know forgiveness of sin. It would be this vision that would sustain him through every adversity (2 Cor. 4:7-12). Despite his tumultuous physical and spiritual experiences (2 Cor. 11:23-28) he could declare to Agrippa that he was faithful to that heavenly vision and proclaim to Timothy that he was not ashamed to meet his Savior (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Without a vision the people are subject to peril (Prov.29:18). The warrior must have a vision that is established by the eternal God so he can live his life according to the unchangeable truth revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

We are most vulnerable in the area we are most sensitive and that is where the enemy aims to strike. For that reason, it is important to be protected by truth so we will not be fooled by the lies of the deceiver. Paul reveals the purpose of the armor was the ability to stand firm against the wiles (trickery) of the devil. In Eph. 4:14,15, he describes the subterfuge as ever-changing opinions and the antidote for it is the declaration of divine truth in love. As the belt provided a place so the sword could be readily available so truth provides a place for the sword

of the Spirit. A sword is not physically imposing while in its scabbard and attached to the belt. However, it does provide immense security to the one wearing it because he knows its availability and its effectiveness. Although it may rest innocuously in times of peace, it becomes the deciding factor in times of conflict. To the one established in divine truth the Word of God is his confidence in untroubled times and his all-powerful weapon in times of distress.

### **BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS – MOTIVATION**

The second article of the armor listed is the breastplate. To the Roman combatant this would be the coat of mail (links of metal connected together to form a vest-like apparatus), which would protect the vital organs in the torso area. For the Christian this is called the breastplate of righteousness. Scripture gives us a definition of what righteousness consists of in 1 Thess. 5:8. Here we are told to put on the breastplate of faith and love. There is no such thing as private righteousness without the public manifestation of it. Faith and love must work together to protect the heart and soul of the Christian soldier. Faith is the core confidence that ultimately manifests itself in the execution of the divine will in my life. Love is the divine motivation working in us in order to produce public works of faith in the most effectual manner. As the links of metal must overlap and connect to provide the utmost physical protection so love and faith must combine to both protect the innermost reaches of our spiritual being and enable us to give witness to the power of Christ in our lives. In John's gospel, Jesus is recorded as telling His followers that there are two proofs of discipleship. They would be identified with Him because of their love for one another (Jn. 13:35) and by the fruit they produced (Jn. 15:8). Divine love would be their motivation and an eternal effectiveness would be their public testimony.

A good example of this can be found in the life of Peter (Lk. 22:31-34). Peter had enormous public arrogance and little self-confidence. He was certain he was superior to the other disciples in his ability to face adversity. The other eleven may be capable of succumbing to adversity but certainly not him. So when Jesus told him of his impending failure he immediately objected. Jesus recognized in him what He recognizes in us: a willing spirit but a weak flesh. He told the boastful disciple that he would go through a time of sifting. His flesh would not pass

the test but his faith ultimately would ultimately endure because the Savior was interceding for him. That core faith would ultimately triumph, though it would be sorely tried. Once the battle was over then the residential divine love put in him by the Holy Spirit would surface in his ministry to others. Therefore, the failure who refused to acknowledge his relationship with the Lord when confronted by a young servant girl would soon bravely proclaim before the most powerful Jewish leaders, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19,20).

### **FOOTWEAR OF PEACE – SUSTAINING ASSURANCE**

Paul instructs the Ephesians to have their feet shod with the preparation of the good news of peace. The feet are a very important part of a combatant’s physiology. It is the last part of the body to receive the command to act but the first part to respond. Its action goes a long way to determining how the battle will turn out. It is also the first indication as to the quality and character of the soldier. Feet that advance belong to the warrior and heroic deeds are possible. Feet that retreat brand the person a coward and doom any effort to failure.

Since the feet play such an important role in the well-being of the soldier, the footwear that covers them must be of equal importance. Without proper shoes the soldier would be constantly beset by small irritants that lay in his path. Certainly, the last thing the combatant needs to be concerned with is what irritants are underfoot. It is also important that the shoe or sandal fit properly or it will become a source of irritation by itself. The footwear must be adapted to the foot’s features so it can serve rather than hinder. This is the power of peace. It mutes the aggravations of life by being a buffer between the irritant and the Christian. It also adapts to the personality of the saint so it becomes a personalized help. Peace is not “one size fits all,” but it is a divine gift that guards the heart and mind (Phil. 4:6-9), even when the recipient is unaware of it.

The peace that covers the feet of the victor is the result of the assurance that our God reigns (Isa. 52:6,7). These are the feet that carry the herald encouraging peace to the troubled with the good news of salvation. The impact of the message is Christ has arrived on the scene

and His appearance destroys the work of Satan (1 Jn. 3:8). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Anointed One defeats the enemy and changes the situation (Isa. 61:1-3). His healing and liberation changes sorrow into gladness. Now, instead of being a leaf blown to and fro by the winds of adversity, the saint is an oak of righteousness planted by the Lord.

The child of God who lives in peace is the one who is certain his Savior knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:9,10). It is only through experience that the soldier can come to this understanding. In some previous time he must have faced danger and found Jesus faithful. Because of this ordeal, he has learned that his trust in Christ is not in vain and that his Savior truly reigns. He knows that God is one; there is no other nor is there anyone like Him. His purpose is established and His plan will be accomplished according to His design. This is the peace that upholds and encourages the one in the midst of the conflict.

The best illustration of this is found at Christ's final Passover with His twelve disciples, when Jesus told His disciples about the nature of divine peace (Jn. 14:25-27). It would come when the Holy Spirit reminds them of the dimensions and dynamics of God's Word and especially that portion of Scripture specifically empowered for them at that moment in time. It would be divine peace, which makes it an eternal peace. It is designed to be their sustaining force in the midst of confusing and concerning circumstances. Then Jesus makes it more personal (Jn. 16:31-33). He told them there would shortly come a time of great trial in their lives and every one of them would fail. Also, it would be a time of sorrow and loneliness for Him as He endured the cross and its entire agony. However, Jesus would experience the identical peace He would eventually supply for His beloved because His Father's will was being accomplished and victory lay just beyond the tomb. He told them these things before they happened so they would know that the Almighty had all things under control; thus they could abide in His peace during any storm. The world only offers tribulation; that is a fact. However, we can experience divine peace and confront any enemy with courage because Jesus has overcome the world. That is a certainty.

### **SHIELD OF FAITH – SPIRITUAL COVERING**

Verse 16 exclusively deals with the shield of faith. The shield mentioned here is large and door-shaped. Because of its shape (curved to cover a soldier's body) and size (about 2 feet wide and 4 feet high) it was best used in unison with fellow warriors. Its main function was to protect against missiles shot from a distance rather than close combat. When not in use the soldier kept it covered so it would not be corrupted by the ambient elements.

This verse starts with the phrase, "in addition to all," which means that the first three pieces of armor should already be in place before utilizing the final three. Remembering that he is instructing Christians in their battle with the enemies of their souls, it is essential that they have already girded themselves with truth, covered their hearts with righteousness (faith and love) and established a foundation of peace. This is the core of battle preparation. We cannot go into confrontation without established truth in our lives, the right motivations and a confidence in Christ that will sustain in adversity. Once these are put in place we are ready to uncover and employ the shield of faith. Faith is that essence that covers the believer when circumstances arise that is beyond his control. It protects against those things that come from afar while he battles those things close at hand.

The soldier's shield was covered with a cloth or an animal skin when not in use to prevent premature deterioration. Faith cannot protect the Christian if the Christian does not diligently protect his own faith (2 Tim. 1:12-14). After expressing his absolute confidence in the Lord's protective power Paul encourages Timothy to hold firmly to the solid Word of God in faith and love and guard, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the treasure entrusted to him. Faith can be corrupted if we allow it to be constantly assaulted by the influences of this world (Matt. 13:18-23; 1 Tim. 1:18,19). A maintained shield will prove trustworthy and do its job protecting the warrior.

The size and shape of the shield was important to the well-being of the combatant. Its design allowed for maximum protection for the soldier and his comrades. It was enough to cover the whole person and, when cooperating with other shields, formed a wall of protection for the entire battalion. When confronted with spears thrown from ground level the shields formed a wall. When assaulted by arrows above the shields were lifted to cover the men. Thus, the

shields were best used in unison. This is how faith in action works. It is made to conform to our personal needs and situations. Not everyone is given the same measure of faith (Rom. 12:3-8) but the power of faith is not in its dimensions but its potential (Lk. 17:5,6). However, the effectiveness of faith in the saint is greatly increased when united with others of “like precious faith” (Matt. 18:19,20). Like any squad of soldiers, if one man fails in his responsibilities he puts the whole group in jeopardy.

The shield Paul describes is most effective when used as a defense against missiles. It is not an offensive weapon and is too cumbersome to use in a hand-to-hand fight. Its real strength is combating things that are beyond the warrior’s control, such as arrows and spears. This weaponry was used by unseen enemies and could not be stopped once in flight. They would seem to come out of nowhere and were indefensible by the common foot soldier. He literally had to cover himself with his shield and wait out the attack. The Bible says this about Hezekiah who was a godly king of Judah, “He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him” (2 Ki. 18:5-7). In the direst moment of his reign (the siege of Jerusalem – 2 Ki. 18:17-37) he had no other choice but to hold fast to his God and trust His deliverance (2 Ki. 19:14-19).

The times of unexpected or undeserved difficulties are the hardest for the Christian and cause the most severe questioning of his relationship with his Lord. It is in those moments that the shield of faith must be uncovered and utilized. Its protection in the most tenuous of circumstances keeps the warrior in the field and going forward. It is certain that the sight of a host of arrows coming toward the troops has tempted many soldiers to flee. But the experienced ones know that the greatest safety is under the shield. In the same way, the child of God finds his greatest security under the shelter of the shield of faith (Ps. 91:1-10).

Paul concludes his analogy of the shield by declaring it is “able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.” This is an interesting statement, since a normal shield has no

ability to put out any fire. In fact, unless the shield had a metal exterior it was subject to being severely damaged by a flaming arrow. Paul's emphasis was that the shield of faith does not just deflect the designs of Satan; it utterly triumphs over it. A flaming arrow that finds its mark is not just lethal; it is extremely painful as well. One of the purposes of the shield of faith is to prevent the pain of sin as well as its lethal power. Those who are covered by the shield during the storm of satanic arrows will hear the noise and acknowledge the existence of them. However, as long as he remains under the covering he will be protected as the apple of the Savior's eye (Ps. 17:6-12).

### **HELMET OF SALVATION – MATURITY OVER TIME**

Paul encouraged the readers to put on the helmet of salvation. To the body of believers in Thessalonica he describes this helmet as the hope of salvation (1 Thess. 5:8-10). Paul explained that salvation is initiated at the moment we are spiritually reborn and is completed when we are ushered into God's eternal presence as good and faithful servants and overcomers in the faith (Rev. 2:7,11,17,26-28; 3:5,12,21). It is evident that the new birth is an instantaneous event as proven by Jesus' proclamation to the thief of the cross (Lk. 23:39-43). However, there is a distinction between redemption, which is the new birth, and salvation, which is final rescue. This is very important because many Christians limit the entirety of salvation to the born-again experience. Later, when they experience some failure in their lives, they become discouraged and fear for the salvation. Jesus knew the spiritual power of the experienced Christian is often weaker than the flesh (Matt. 26:36-41). Nevertheless, the word 'hope' means a confident expectation of a positive outcome and is associated with some time-driven process. Sometimes we forget that the hardest thing for God to do was making a way so we could know His forgiveness. Those things we see as most difficult are the things the heavenly Father sees as the easiest. Therefore, when we are beset by fear and adversity we have this confidence: the God who redeemed us will see us through any and all opposition and situation (Phil. 1:3-6). This requires a helmet designed to promote growth while protecting against worldly access through the senses.

The helmet of a warrior is designed to provide him with maximum protection for his head and still allow full range of vision and communication. Its responsibility is to keep the harmful elements out and the life-sustaining elements secure. If the helmet's construction completely covered the eyes, nose, ears and mouth the head would be entirely safe but the rest of the body would be vulnerable and the achievement of the soldier's mission would be impossible. The helmet must be made in such a way that protection and military feasibility are perfectly coordinated.

Salvation is the sentinel of the gateways of the senses. Whatever is received through the senses first enters the mind. The mind then directs the information to our spiritual side or our carnal side. Whatever is fed the most grows the strongest. Therefore our inner man is greatly affected by the sensual world. Salvation is the spiritual act that changes the heart and regenerates the spirit. It is through our senses that we hear the gospel and/or see a Christian witness. It is through our mouths that we confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior. What we observe through our senses we process in our minds, which is the initial step in our introduction to spiritual things. Then, once we accept Christ as our provision for sin's cleansing, we grow spiritually through the same process. The reverse is also true in that those things which are detrimental to our spiritual health enter into our mind and heart through the human gateways.

These damaging elements appeal to our fleshly nature and allow sin to gain influence in our lives. Therefore, in order to maintain spiritual health and to mature into the image of Christ, the eyes and ears must be protected against evil designs and the mouth must remain unencumbered so it can declare the full truth of God's Word.

In Phil. 2:1-11, Paul declares to the church about proper motivation by using the example of Christ. By combining verse 1 and 2 we are instructed to have sympathetic minds by encouraging each other in Christ, to console one another in love, be united in the Spirit through fellowship and being intent on one purpose through affection and compassion. Nothing is to be done through selfishness but strive to have the same attitude Jesus has, considering others before thinking of our own concerns. This means not holding on to self-interest but being a servant to all. It also means allowing the heavenly Father to exalt us according to His choosing and for His

glory. In verses 12 and 13 he tells the Philippians to follow the Godly examples set before them and, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” because it is the Almighty who it is at work in them so His will would be accomplished through them. The expression ‘work out’ means to fully complete. This is not accomplished until God’s will for us is totally accomplished. Since this is the attitude exhibited in Jesus’ earthly ministry, so it should be, as those following in His footsteps, in ours. Salvation is more than a momentary occurrence; it is a life-long purpose. That is why it is to be regarded with utmost respect. Finally, in verses 14-16, he urges them to act like children of God until the time they stand before the Savior. The helmet of salvation makes this possible by protecting access to the vital elements of Christian growth and witness.

### **SWORD OF THE SPIRIT – TAKING THE OFFENSIVE**

Paul concludes this military illustration by encouraging the saints to take, “The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” This is the only offensive weapon mentioned but it completely enough to defeat any foe. It should be noted that there are no long-distance weapons for the Christian warrior. The whole armor is designed for close-quarter combat, which means we must be willing and able to confront our enemy face-to-face. Since it is the desire of man to keep fear as far away as possible, the use of this weapon requires a bold attitude and a learned expertise.

As the sword is attached to the belt of the soldier so God’s Word must be anchored to unwavering eternal truth. Truth is foundational but it is also inert until activated by an outside force. Every scientific discovery is based on a truth that has existed since the world’s creation. It took many years of learning and experimentation to discover it and make it productive. The same process is required to bring the full effect of the Word of God into fruition. When unsheathed the Bible becomes truth in its most powerful form. When the saint properly wields the Spirit’s sword the things declared by the Almighty God are activated (2 Tim. 2:15) because the application of the written Word makes public the power and authority of everlasting living Word (Jn. 5:39; Jn. 15:26,27). When Jesus was dedicated in the temple, the prophet Simeon declared, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign

to be opposed....to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed” (Lk. 2:34,35). John described Christ this way, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:14,16,17). Jesus is glorified and divine life conquers corruption whenever the Word is declared and acted upon (Jn. 10:10). Wickedness thrives because it stays hidden, disguising itself as “an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:13-15), thus giving it an air of legitimacy. It even attempts to contort Scripture to justify its activities and purposes (2 Cor. 4:1,2). However, the appearance of everlasting truth reveals wickedness for what it is and holds it accountable. Heb. 4:12,13 describes the sword of the Spirit as living and active. It divides the soul (the eternal essence [character] of man) from the spirit (the eternal communicative and creative force in man; the animation of man). There it establishes a buffer that filters the things that enter the soul, which is the eternal (God-breathed) part of man. Because it is pure truth it only allows truth to pass, thus, strengthening and sanctifying the Christian. In other words, it enables him to discern and comprehend the voice of God from the many contrary voices and influences that seek to imitate or supplant the heavenly. It also exposes sin for the destroyer it truly is.

The Psalmist declared that the combination of praise and the Word of God will execute vengeance upon the enemy and is the power that binds every foe (Ps. 149:5-9). Verse 6 implies a willingness to trust (“Let the high praises of God be in their mouth”) and a call to action (“a two-edged sword in their hand”). Until these two are combined the most powerful weapon on earth remains in its sheath. Once released it executes divine judgment on sin and all its effects. Scripture is also like the fire that melts the metal and brings the dross to the surface and the hammer that shatter the rock (Jer. 23:29). This refers to the process by which silver is refined from its original state. Throughout this process it must be remembered that the excavator and the silversmith see in the ore something of great significance, even if other people cannot. The hammer analogy refers to the strength of the Word. It does not break, it does the breaking. Many of the old habits and attitudes must be shattered before the individual can be useful. This is the process used to extract the precious material from solid rock. As the excavator must

employ a tool that is harder than the rock that encapsulates the valuable ore so the Savior must use something stronger than the grip of sin. That is the life-giving Word of God. Once broken, the ore, with all its impurities, is taken to the refiner for the smelting process. Ps. 12:6,7 says that the words of the Lord are like refined silver. It requires intense heat to release the impurities contained in the silver ore. This process is repeated over and over again, with each firing releasing more dross. The silversmith continues this process until he sees his reflection in the molten liquid. That is how he knows the metal is ready to present as high quality. This what the Word does in our lives. Its constant flame gradually releases the trash of the old life until we are purified and fit for the Mater's use. This process can be painful and traumatic. It is also necessary to enable the warrior to do battle against his enemy. If the purpose of this moment in our lives is to overpower the entrenched fear, then it is important to be made ready to wield the sword of the Spirit. Our triumph is assured because the power of the Word is devolved from its eternal nature (Ps. 119:89). God has said it and it is settled forever. The adversarial opinions of the world, in no way, affect it. It established all of creation (Jn. 1:1-3) and it will bring time to a conclusion (19:11-16).

### **VERSES 32-37**

Once the Christian warrior is properly equipped and trained he is ready for anything the enemy can bring against him. The confidence of being fully protected by the armor of God and armed with the sword of the Spirit will enable him to defeat the enemy regardless of the field of battle. In Israel's case, Sihon marshaled his forces to a place called Jahaz and there the battle was enjoined. Jahaz means 'stomp,' implying a hard spot like a threshing floor. Life-changing events are seldom accomplished in the soft places. Tough battles are always fought in difficult venues. No one actively involved in combat appreciates the battlefield while the war is raging. To him it is a place of terror, confusion and death. It is not the position he would prefer being in. However, for the victory to be won, he knows he is to stand his ground if he must and attack if he can. Above all, he must not allow the battleground to become his burial ground. He must find a way to win. To paraphrase a line from the movie 'Patton', "No one has ever won a war dying for his country; he won it by making the other fellow die for his." The purpose of the spiritual battle is to destroy the fear that controls us. Many times this has to be done in the midst of chaotic and

bewildering circumstances. Since all battlefields are places of confusion and panic, it is incumbent upon the warrior to fully rely on the commander-in-chief who is able to see the entire terrain rather than the small plot of ground the combatant occupies. Though sometimes it seems that the entire enemy army is attacking our lone outpost, but that is never the case. This is the enemy's way of keeping the focus on us and our circumstances. A self-centered response limits the vision and delays the developing understanding of God's ultimate design. A soldier is only a part of the overall strategy but still must do his responsibility for the plan to succeed. The soldier must not abandon his part of the battlefield. Any break in the line gives the enemy the advantage and puts his fellow warriors at risk. Therefore, he must confront and defeat his fear in order for the army to accomplish its mission. This is not an easy place to be in but it is a necessary one for him at the moment.

Verse 33 says, "And the Lord God delivered him over to us; and we defeated him with his sons and all his people." Two important truths revealed in this verse show the cooperation between the Almighty Lord and Obedient Christian in the victory over fear. First, God does His part by bringing the source of fear into the open and by declaring it defeated. The painful part of fear is acknowledging its existence and then exposing its cause. This is very difficult to undergo, regardless of spiritual condition. However, it becomes somewhat less complicated when we keep in mind that this is our loving heavenly Father's doing and He is only allowing it because victory waits at the end of the ordeal. Secondly, we must remember that in every battle there must be active participation by those who need deliverance. Too often we think that God does it all while we stay on the sidelines and cheer Him on. When fear rears its ugly head we must not dismay but accept it as a chance to bravely and fully deal with it. This requires a divine perspective accompanied by a unique spiritual courage. The saint must also be confident that his Savior is fully involved in this struggle. He must acknowledge that the Lord intends that every battle culminate in total success and compromise with sin is not a component of His nature.

Life-controlling fear is an emotion that must be courageously confronted and completely conquered. If any root is allowed to remain it will grow again. Israel's triumph meant the utter devastation of Sihon. Scripture does not record what military tactics were used (like it does with

battle at Jericho and Ai). Also, it does not describe the kinds of troops used or who had the numerical advantage. All it says is they defeated the king and his army, killed his sons and all his people. When the Lord is on the scene and actively involved in the struggle the strength and or strategy of the enemy is of no importance. The only thing that was important was that there were no survivors; the only things left were the animals and the plunder. They captured all the cities of the region, regardless of fortifications. The complete victory is described by the territory they now possessed. The entire region of Gilead belonged to them and their eastern border was almost completely secure. Only King Og and his military forces remained to threaten Israel's security.

It is Christ's intention that His disciples enjoy the total liberty He experienced while on earth. Sin always culminates in captivity. It has its beginning in human pride and concludes in human ignorance (Rom. 1:28). The unwitting slave refuses to honor and worship God in sincerity. Soon he drifts into futile speculation that grows into deep-seated imagination. This produces the chaotic ambience in which the truth is replaced by the lie and worship is exchanged for chains. This spiritual darkness eventually deadens senses and distorts his emotions. Therefore, it is not surprising that forced servitude is more mental and emotional than it is physical. Seldom is a slave locked behind bars or has his movement limited by fetters because the purpose of his slavery is to do someone else's bidding. A slave is kept in bondage by the fear of some measure of punishment. That ingrained and constant terror of physical or emotional abuse subdues the natural desire for freedom. He will even accept the very real possibility of his involuntary relocation or separation from his loved ones in his submission to that horror. This is the very nature of sin. It intertwines with our weaknesses and attaches to our emotions until it fully controls our actions. Now it determines every part of our lives, including our relationship with others. The success of its power is rooted in the assumption that fear is mental and/or emotional only. Where those are its points of manifestation, the true cause is the spiritual damage inflicted by unseen oppressors. The visible perpetrators of that hurt may be human but the driving force is demonic.

To combat this oppression the child of God must recognize the importance of obedience to the Word of God and the divine will it discloses. In Jn. 8:31-38 Jesus revealed the three essentials for the eradication of fear: abiding in His Word, the association through discipleship and being certain of the truth. It must be remembered that He was addressing the Jews of that day who believed the popular lie that they were a free people. They did not understand the depth of their bondage. In verse 38 Christ tried to tell them that intimate fellowship with the Father was a real possibility but it would require surrender. Full submission results in heaven finding a place to touch earth and giving the Holy Spirit a place to dwell and manifest Himself. The outcome is spiritual and physical liberty and a life-enhancing experience (2 Cor. 3:17,18). This was the secret to freedom Jesus enjoyed.

### **ABIDING IN HIS WORD**

The word ‘abide’ is defined by Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance as “to stay in a given place, state, relation or expectancy”. This is the preparatory experience. The new generation of Israelites would not be able to conquer anything if they did not stay under the leadership and mentorship of Moses. There was nothing to prevent them from getting disgusted with the situation and leaving. By abiding in the camp they learned and matured, even though they may not have realized it at the moment. The saint is called to do the same thing.

Since abiding in the Word of God can be an extensive and time-consuming investigation we will limit it to a few verses from Ps. 119, which is a thorough description of the power and grace of Scripture (it is worth its own dedicated study). The Psalmist understood the treasure we have in the Scripture (vs. 11). Abiding in the Word provides a healthy reverence for the Savior, the liberty to live without fear (vs. 45) and the peace and security of God’s love (vs. 165). Verses 97-105 condenses many of the blessings of abiding in the Word, which renders important insights and wisdom to the individual who is determined to dwell there. It prevents the child of God from gravitating toward the ever-present evil that is constantly surrounding him. And it uncovers the sweet things that the heavenly Father has for us. It truly is, “A lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

### **ASSOCIATION THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP**

The second essential is association through discipleship. This is a public allegiance to Christ's divine authority. A person must make a decision, openly declare it and consistently submit to it. In times of distress the challenge to overcome doubt is very real. Not all have the spiritual fortitude to make public what they believe to be true (Jn. 12:42,43). They are more concerned about the present and what others think than the approval of the eternal God. If doubt establishes a beachhead fear will soon follow. The option to waver must be summarily rejected. This is the attitude faithful Joshua declared in his declining years (Josh. 24:14,15). He was very familiar with Israel's sad history of disloyalty. So, he wanted it made clear that he and all he had influence over were going to associate themselves with Jehovah. This is the same decision the disciples made as the large multitude that followed Jesus after the feeding of the 5000 had begun to wander away (Jn. 6:60,66-69). Peter voiced their sentiments when he declared that Christ alone had the words of eternal life and their faith in Him being the Holy One sent from God had not abated.

Paul's great effectiveness as a herald of the gospel is found in his courageous association with the Savior (Rom. 1:16,17). His desire to share its redeeming power outdistanced his fear of physical harm or rejection by his society. Later, he encouraged his spiritual son to follow his example (2 Tim. 1:13,14). Timothy had seen firsthand the extent of his leader's suffering but the aged apostle told him to ignore all that. His encouragement to Timothy was to remain connected to the Master. He needed to continue to be faithful to the gospel and live in the faith and love that are in Jesus. He was also to guard, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the gifts entrusted to him. It would be those treasures that would identify him with Christ. There will always be a battle with flesh and the apostle described his to the church in Rome (Rom. 7:18-23). He described the power of sin and its potential to enslave. But, by declaring his allegiance to the Lamb of God, he proclaimed sin and fear to have been defeated by the power of Christ through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:24-8:2).

### **BEING CERTAIN OF THE TRUTH**

The final essential for eradicating fear in our lives is being certain of the truth. This is not being delusional, stubborn or arrogant; it is being fully confident that God knows the end from

the beginning and that the truth He has already revealed to us is leading to a positive outcome. Paul used the example of Abraham to illustrate this truth (Rom. 4:18-22). The patriarch waited 75 years for the son promised by God. Despite the circumstances, made more hopeless with each passing day, he refused to allow his faith to weaken. Instead it grew stronger because of the special relationship he had with the Lord. He was recorded as, “being fully assured that what He (God) had promised He was also able to perform.” This expression of faith was regarded by God as righteousness for him.

When Jesus said that we can know the liberating truth of God He was not saying that we can be casually acquainted with it or have a theological or theoretical understanding of it. What He is saying is that we can have such an intimacy with it that any subsequent action on our part will be immersed in peace. Paul lived in the certainty of truth. He was convinced that God would not forsake him at anytime or in any circumstance (Rom. 8:35-39). He was fully persuaded that nothing would be able to separate him and the love Jesus had for him and, as a result, he was more than a conqueror through the power of his Savior. He was also just as convinced that his labors for the divine kingdom would have an eternal impact (2 Tim. 1:12). He was convinced in his reliance upon Christ because he had an intimacy with Him to the place where he could declare he knew Him. For him there was no doubt that what he had entrusted to Jesus would be guarded by Him and all that he had accomplished had been committed to the Lord and it would be safe and continue to bear fruit long after he was gone. This is why he could conclude his epistle to his spiritual son on a note of confidence despite the nearness of his martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:6-8). He had done all he could in labor, perseverance and faithfulness. There was no hint of uncertainty in him; Jesus had his reward waiting and that others would receive theirs as well.

The noteworthy aspect of the battle with fear is its momentous consequences. It demands the unconditional surrender of the defeated party. There is no negotiation or reconciliation; the victorious side will totally dominate the loser. This is why preparation before and determination during the confrontation is extremely important for the warrior. The midst of the battle is not the place to try to prepare; if that happens he has already lost. For Israel to have compromised with

Sihon would have put everything they had experienced and accomplished up to that point at risk. Their northeastern border would not be secure, they would be constantly concerned about future attacks and the pagan religions of the region would have the potential to corrupt the holiness requirement of their worship of Jehovah. For Israel, victory had to be utterly complete or it would eventually mean their defeat. For this kind of triumph to be accomplished it would take the power of God. Verses 33-36 declare this is exactly what happened. Moses reported the results of the battle as having accomplished three things: they captured all the cities, they left no survivors and they took the usable spoil. These illustrate the things that need to happen in our confrontation with fear so it can be totally defeated in our lives: the total elimination of compromises, the capture of entrenched attitudes and using what is valuable for future ministry. Paul, using himself as an example, warned of being overconfidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:2-11). His struggle was against misplaced national pride, religious zeal and misguided religious education. His struggle against those things would be his defining battle (Rom. 7:7-8:2).

### **TOTAL ELIMINATION OF COMPROMISE**

In 2 Cor. 10:3-6, Paul gives the scenario of the spiritual battle that must take place. Verse 6 reveals the priority achieving total conquest, “And we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.” Paul told the Ephesians that he would deal with them as a whole and then deal with any remaining rebellious factions. There was no sense trying to put out small fires until the big one has been contained. The inference for us is this: before we can capture entrenched mindset, which are the origins of our fears, we must tear down the walls that surround them. The first obstacle to be confronted is the fleshly tendency to compromise. This is the acceptance of the seemingly minor or innocuous things that, if left alone, will grow into a force strong enough to captivate. These compromises can be clad in the religious as well as in the sinful. Paul declared his obstacles were considered admirable in his pre-conversion day (Phil. 3:4-6). He had great pride in his heritage (born an Israelite, of the tribe of Benjamin). His adherence to the Law (circumcised on the eighth day, a Hebrew of Hebrews) and his zeal for it (persecutor of the church) were commended by his peers. His education was superior to most of his generation (a Pharisee, blameless according to the Law). As wonderful and acceptable as

those attributes might be to others they were hindrances to him and had to be eradicated. He had to come to a place in his life where those things were regarded as obstacles rather than assets (vs. 7). He described his present attitude toward those former points of pride as dung. They had no value whatsoever compared to the beauty of experiencing Jesus. Joshua alerted the Israelites to the danger of compromise (Jos. 23:11-13). Any remnant that is allowed to remain is a hidden root that can spring to life when the conditions are right. Jud. 9:45 describes the devastation needed to eradicate the enemies' strongholds in our lives. Everything that opposes liberty must be torn down, destroyed and made unproductive.

Moses proclaimed that the victorious Israelites army had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of every city. This may seem cruel to us today but, unless this action was taken, Israel would never be completely free of the past. The potential for it to come back to harass them was all too real. The weapons we are given are specifically designed to prevail against the gates of hell (Matt. 16:13-19) and divinely powerful to destroy spiritual, emotional and physical strongholds. This means we are required to attack, which requires courage, skill and determination. In our society generally and in our lives specifically fortresses are built up over time. The longer they have had to grow the more entrenched they become until they are accepted as normal. For Christ to have full liberty to enact the will of the Father in a situation or circumstance those strongholds must be destroyed. Their walls consist of speculations and imaginations. The mind and pride of man is exalted above the knowledge of God and stubbornly stands in the way of the elimination of slavery-inducing fear. Speculation (assumption) and imagination (the lack of divine truth) protect the kingdom of fear and must be destroyed before anxiety can be eliminated. Jeremiah was empowered by the Almighty to be a warrior for his generation (Jer. 1:4-10). When commissioned as a prophet He expressed his apprehension, telling God that he was too young and not a gifted speaker. He speculated that no one would listen. The Lord rejected that argument by replying that Jeremiah's effectiveness would not be based upon his abilities but upon the appointment. This is the difference between philosophy and anointing. Philosophy is predicated upon human acceptance and acceptance is based on compromise. The anointing is founded on truth and truth is always triumphant when given enough time. What was important for the prophet was the touch of God upon his life. Though

weak in the flesh he was formidable in the Spirit. It would not be through his limited capabilities but through the Word of God and the dynamics of the Holy Spirit that kingdoms would be uprooted and broken down. This is possible because Jesus made the powerful powerless and the powerless powerful (Heb. 2:14,15). His death means liberty to those enslaved by the fear of death and the fear of living. Now, all that is required is for the former slaves to unite with Him through the death of their old nature so they can live in the potency of the resurrection. We must acknowledge and surrender to the fact that our old nature has been crucified with Him and our sinful lifestyle has been done away with (Gal. 2:20). Every person has the option of life and death. If he chooses the life of sin he will live a life of death. However, when the Christian fully accedes that he has died with Christ then he will have no other option but live in His life. That moves him from the kingdom of spiritual death to the realm of abundant eternal life. For him the old life is nonexistent because it is covered under the blood of the Savior and has no impact on him whatsoever. That commitment rejects any form of compromise with sin and tears down the strongholds that have dominated and motivated us through fear. The believer who learns to walk in that truth eventually discovers the benefits of this unlimited liberty in Jesus.

### **CAPTURE OF ENTRENCHED ATTITUDES**

The second obstacle to be faced is entrenched mindsets. This is exemplified by the reaction of the spies to the land of Canaan (Num. 13:27,28). They witnessed the richness and quality of the land but they focused on the size of the obstacles that stood in the way of conquering it: the nations were too powerful, the cities were too fortified and the people were too large. Only Caleb and Joshua saw the possibility God had in store. On the other hand, Moses, in his description of the defeat of Sihon and his kingdom, declared that no city was too high because the Lord had delivered everything over to Israel. This is the difference between the battle the believer wages and the one the sinner wages. 2 Cor. 10:5 reveals that the ultimate goal of spiritual combat is taking disobedient thoughts captive. Paul replaced his entrenched attitudes and traditional mindset with a new set of values (Phil. 3:8,9). We cannot capture something with nothing; there must be a superior replacement. When the apostle realized the excellence of knowing Jesus and compared it to the academic knowledge of the Law he made his old way of

thinking captive to his new understanding. The consequences of this were two-fold: it opened up the Law to him in a new and living way and it gave him insight into the realities of God that had been hidden up to now. This turned his religion into a relationship and brought the dead letter of the Law to life. Now, instead of striving to appease God, he began enjoying Him. The impossible quest for self-righteousness was replaced by the divine righteousness of Christ, which is given through grace and received by faith. His new mindset gave him the liberty to love rather than fear God. It also gave him the freedom to fail without the fear of judgment or retribution. His new insight helped him experience the fullness of the Father's love for him and the release of his love for the Father.

The best way to bring thoughts into submission is being familiar with the will and nature of the Father. Only then can all thoughts be judged according to their spiritual appropriateness. The believer must do this to avoid the pitfalls of insincerity (Isa. 29:13). The perfect use of words occurs when they express the fullness of the heart. If words are not disciplined then they will continue even after the thoughts had wandered. This makes them meaningless and insincere. When David found his adversary in a vulnerable position one of officers proposed assassinating him (1 Sam. 26:7-11). This action seemingly would be taking advantage of an opportunity God had provided. However, David knew Saul had been made king by divine will and it was not his place to interject himself into that will. The moment of the king's death and circumstances of his own ascension to the throne of Israel would be according to divine timing. Although this may have seemed strange and foolish to his comrades David had learned the true nature of God because of the time he had spent in His presence and he would act upon that knowledge and not upon some human opinion. On a higher plane, Jesus responded to potentially rebellious thoughts by declaring His submission to the will of His Father (Lk. 22:39-44). He refused the temptation to avoid the cross because He knew the nature of God's love for mankind and the plan of God for their salvation. We also must spend time in the Word and in the presence of the Holy Spirit in order to know His character and find the strength to submit ourselves (thoughts and actions) to His perfect will. Our war is not solely against what is visible and, therefore, the weapons to be used must be spiritual ones. Although we are in the flesh we must not be fooled into trying to overcome the powers of Satan through earthly means. The ability to

take, “every thought captive to obedience of Christ,” comes from a willingness to magnify Jesus as the Son of God and as the Deliverer and taking all disobedience to Him as serious threat to His honor and our spiritual well-being (Lev. 10:1-3). The Lord dwells in holiness and that nature is to be revered (Ps. 68:17,18; Eph. 4:7-10). When He is glorified He takes the enemy captive and makes them do homage to Him. In His exaltation, Jesus blesses His people with spiritual gifts that liberates and edifies them. He is the satisfaction and confidence that fills our lives and gives us hope.

### **USING WHAT IS VALUABLE**

The ultimate purpose for the battle is two-fold. The first one is the revelation of the spiritual quality God has implanted in each of us. Jesus shared a parable about three servants who were given responsibilities by their master who was going on a journey (Matt. 25:14-27). The men who received five and two talents were willing to put their value out in the public. In so doing, they benefitted their master and, ultimately, were blessed themselves. The servant who was given one succumbed to the fear of failure and exhibiting his disinterest by hiding his value in the dirt. Verse 15 says that the lord gave to each man according to his ability. This means that he saw something in them that at least one did not see in himself. Paul recognized this when he wrote to the church in Corinth (2 Cor. 4:6,7). It takes the light of the knowledge that comes from God to reveal the treasure we have in our earthen vessels. The surpassing spiritual power is not based on our estimation of our abilities but on what God knows is within us. This is why our success often comes as a surprise to us.

The consequence of the decisions made by the three servants differs only in respect to their reaction and attitude towards fear. All three had the same master, who had the reputation of being a hard, ambitious and unscrupulous business man. Each one understood the possibility of failure. Each one had ability recognized by their employer. The difference was their decision to overcome or give into fear. The first two chose to trust in their master’s confidence in them. They understood the risks but took advantage of the available opportunities. It may have been difficult but was ultimately worth it. In a similar manner, Paul described this battle with an undefined assailant (2 Cor. 12:7-10). The war was against Paul’s weakness of self-exaltation.

The purpose was a new understanding of God's will. This unknown messenger of Satan was such an opposition that he entreated the Lord three times to remove it. All three times God said no. Since God gave him no definitive solution for this trial, Paul had to be content with trusting the Master's call on his life. The purpose of this struggle was to reveal a truth to Paul and others. The valuable spoil of the battle was the awareness of the grace of God for each occasion and the power of God for each weakness.

The man who was given one talent may have had more emotional baggage than the other two. Though his employer saw ability in him, he did not see as much. If the servant did not think much of himself before this then being given less than the other two may have reduced that self-esteem even more. He may have interpreted the master's decision as a lack of confidence and that assumption may have been a source of embarrassment for him. He may have felt since little was given to him then little would be expected. His mistake was not seeing this commission as an opportunity to gain experience and justify his lord's trust by being faithful to the command. This is the effective spiritual blindness that fear produces. The immediate reaction is to not even try. This was the reaction of the Israelites to the report of the spies. They could not see past their anxiety so they buried what was valuable and refused the opportunity given them. Paul used an example out of his life to reinforce this point (1 Tim. 1:15,16). In his own estimation he was chief of sinners because he had not only hated the Christians but persecuted them and sought their imprisonment or deaths. Yet, despite his attitudes, Jesus gave him mercy so that others could witness the divine patience available to them. This asset serves as an example for those caught in the fear of death and gives them the hope of eternal life.

The other two servants were able to tear down the walls of compromise and commit themselves to their lord's will. They also were able to captivate thoughts and attitudes that ran counter to his command. This meant they could think like liberated men rather than slaves and seek the spoil of their successful battle. The third servant could not escape the slave mentality. He saw the task as too difficult and too risky. He could not think past his history. So, he buried what was valuable and, as a result, was rejected by his master. His excuses were dismissed as

laziness and his fear equated with wickedness. That which he had received was given to another and he lost out on a life of joy.

Paul acknowledged that the Lord saved him for a purpose – so that Jesus Christ might be revealed in him (Gal. 1:15,16). At his conversion he was appointed to be a minister (a servant) and a witness (a herald) of the good news of Christ (Acts 26:15-18). He would take this valuable treasure and open it up to the world (both Jews and Gentiles) so their eyes could be opened to the light of Jesus. This “pearl of great price” would be shared with those in darkness and enslaved by Satan. This treasure would point men and women to forgiveness of sin and an eternal inheritance with the Son of God.

The second purpose is what the experience produces in us for the benefit of others. The obstacle to achieving this is recognizing the value of the experience without being obsessed with it or paralyzed by it. Those things that once mastered us can be of great personal value if they are used for example or understanding without becoming a reason to go back. Just because Paul counted his past human achievements as loss does not mean he defined his history as useless. It was his studies in Old Testament scriptures that supplemented his person encounter with Jesus and reaffirmed His deity to him. That educational background kept him rooted when others floundered when confronted with adverse situation. His Damascus road experience introduced him to the Savior (Acts 26:9-20). His religious education provided the foundation for the truths to be revealed over time. Because he was a Jew he believed in the coming Messiah. Because he was a Pharisee he believed in the resurrection. Even his persecution of the church provided a motivation for his subsequent missionary activities (Acts 7:55-60). Though his past provided his foundation, his love for God propelled him forward. He desired the deeper spiritual things as the reward for his labor (Phil. 3:10,11). For him the spoil of his battle was the experience of resurrection power, an undiminished association with Christ and conformity to His death so he could have eternal life. These eternal riches were so vital to him that he was willing to battle his deepest fears and challenge his entrenched mindsets to attain them. To him, having the richness of Jesus was everything that mattered in life and nothing was going to stand in his way. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to benefit from their former fear of death (1 Cor. 15:54-58). They

had suffered the sting of the fear of death and been subjected to the power of sin. Now they have experienced the victory through Jesus. Despite of their past errors they were now to live as liberated people. Since they were the product of someone else's faithful labor they could be steadfast and abound in the work of the Lord and know their toil would not be in vain.

Moses said that Israel took the spoil, which meant the valuable material objects that had no power to influence. This requires wisdom and perspective. When Israel defeated Jericho they were instructed not to take any of the spoil but Achan did not obey (Jos. 6:16-19; 7:1). Although it was a relatively small amount of gold and silver and just a piece of cloth, it eventually caused the deaths of 36 innocent soldiers plus Achan and his entire household. The things of the past are usable only if they are permitted by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes those things can help the Christian understand the difficulties of an individual and sometimes a past experience can help the minister relate to the hurting. But this always requires caution and spiritual sensitivity because two situations are seldom identical and there is always the danger of the weaker person finding justification for his human foibles and any subsequent action.

Three things of value came out of Israel's obedience to the will of God. First, it became a material blessing for them because it met the financial need of the tribes of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh (Num. 32:1-5,33). The character and climate of the land was very suitable for raising livestock and they could live there in security because the enemy had been eliminated instead of being accommodated. Secondly, the battle became an inspiration for future military endeavors (Deut. 31:3-6). In his final address to the nation, Moses reminded them that what God did for them against Sihon he would do over and over. All they had to do was maintain their faith in Him and act with the identical courage they possessed when they faced the king and his army. They had every reason to believe that God would not fail them in the future because He did not fail them at their potentially weakest moment. Finally, this was the place where the Word of God came alive for them (Deut. 4:44-46). When they initially received the commandments they did so in great terror (Ex. 20:18,19). Now they received it a second time as those who had proved it. There would be no need for smoke and thunder upon a mountain. The people comprehended the importance of it and were able to more fully comprehend it (Deut. 6:1-3). Standing in midst of

this conquered territory they understood the awesome power of God and were not afraid of it. It was here they received the commission to take the Word of God with them as they began the next phase of their journey. And it was here that they were commanded to teach future generations those things they had discovered so their children could inherit in the same promises, experience the same relationship with the heavenly Father and live in the benefits of that relationship.

A concise illustration of the requirements for victory over fear is found in Israel's battle at Jericho (Jos. 6). The first thing that the Israelite soldier encountered was the enormous walls. There were actually two sets of thirty foot high walls; the outer wall was 6 feet thick and the inner wall was 12 feet thick. They were built to discourage any invaders. The soldier was given the following orders. He was to walk around the city once a day for six days and on the seventh day walk around it seven times. At no time was he to say a word regardless of the taunts coming from the people of Jericho. At the appropriate moment after the seventh time circuit he was to shout in his loudest voice and the walls would collapse before him. Then he was to rush straight ahead into the city. All the valuable spoil was to go into the treasury of the Lord and all the people were to be killed except Rahab and those with her.

The walls represent the lifestyle that has been constructed through compromises. Innocent at first, they have built up over time to become a formidable foe to liberty. Through the power of God, walls of speculation and imagination have come down and been destroyed. It now became the soldier's duty to rush in to defeat the people and capture the city. This represents the entrenched attitudes that must be brought under the obedience of Christ. This war is fought one battle at a time. Finally, the spoil was taken. Though a majority of the Israelites would probably disagree, the most important spoil brought out from Jericho was not the gold and silver but Rahab the harlot. The precious metals may have temporary value but Rahab had everlasting value because she was the great-grandmother of David and in the lineage of Jesus. The spoil to which the Holy Spirit leads us is not always the most attractive to the flesh but is always the most eternally beneficial. This is the ultimate reason why God wants us to have victory over life-controlling fear and claim the liberty to be like Christ.

In conclusion, it should be noted that, despite their overwhelming victory, they were cautious not to exceed their limitations (vs. 37). Regardless of the great success, they were still subject to the pitfalls of either trying to be something they were not equipped to be or attempting something they were not commanded to do. This is a reminder that if the victory is of the Lord then the boundaries is of the Lord as well. To try to move beyond them is folly and not subject to His blessing.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **VERSES 1-11**

Israel had defeated Sihon but that was only half the threat. The next challenge was what to do about Og the king of Bashan. If they did not deal with him now their eastern border would never be secure. Remember – this confrontation represents more than just a battle between two armies. It is an illustration of habitual sin in conflict with the new life in the Holy Spirit. Sexual immorality was the other major weakness Israel would have to confront and overcome. There were indications of sexual improprieties when the people worshipped the golden calf shortly after their deliverance from slavery (Ex. 32:1-8), which meant this tendency was part of their lives in Egypt. Sadly, even as they approached the entrance into the Promised Land after wandering the desert as punishment for the hardness of their hearts, this powerful influence cost the people dearly when the prophet Balaam counseled the Moabites to entice Israel with their sensual worship rituals (Num. 25:1-9). To meet the pending military challenge, Israel took a different approach with Og than they did with Sihon. They went out of their way to invade his territory and confront him at Edrei. They were willing to negotiate with Sihon but he was not willing to negotiate with them because the power of fear is control. It is something God must bring into the open so it can be defeated with. On the other hand, sexual immorality is something that must be purposely attacked because its cause is choices we make and its effect is corruptive.

Before discussing the battle between Israel and Og and the conflict between sexual immorality and godliness, it would be beneficial to scripturally examine the atmosphere that surrounded the nation as they entered the land of Bashan. Where Sihon and the territories associated with him were pictures of confusion and anxiety, the places associated with Og present a scene of attraction. This was a highly fertile territory. It was highly productive agriculturally but it was best known for its excellent grazing land. In his song of remembrance, Moses used the cattle of Bashan as an illustration of God's blessing (Deut. 32:9-14). It was also noted for its quality trees, especially oaks (Ezek. 27:6). However, God saw a different picture. Psalms 22 is denoted as a messianic psalm in that it depicts the emotional suffering of Jesus on

the cross. Verses 11-13 include the bulls of Bashan among the tormentors of the Messiah. Bulls are often used in Scripture as symbols of strength. Here Jesus is encircled by them. From this description an inference can be drawn concerning the holy and the immoral. Wickedness is always challenging the divine, seeking to bring it down to a base level. Symbolically, it was present at the crucifixion and, in reality, it surrounds the church today. It defiantly stands against the meaning of the cross. In the midst of Bashan was an elevated mesa called Argob (stony; lump of clay; clod). This is emblematic of sexual immorality, which promotes fleshly desires over spiritual and emotional well-being. Its prominent feature is its attractive beauty but its core is a hard-heart. It does not care for others as much as it desires its own gratification. This is the result of immoral behavior; it starts as a pastime but often becomes an uncontrollable obsession.

The lure of immorality is in its attractiveness and the battle against it is a difficult one because, most of the time, it is not the one we desire to fight. Even the meanings and associations with the names cited in Deut 1:4 (Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei) speaks of the power and pleasure of human lust. The name Og means to move around – to gyrate. This is the appeal to the eye. He was also an imposing figure, being one of the last of the Rephaim who were giants that once populated the region. The attraction of Bashan has already been discussed. The monarch lived in Ashtaroth (fertility) and Edrei (mighty). The city of Ashtaroth was named after the Canaanite goddess of fertility who was closely associated with sexual activity and maternity. Orgies and prostitution were a part of her worship ceremonies and the incorporation of these lascivious practices into the religious life of Israel would plague the nation for hundreds of years to come. Human sexuality is an overwhelmingly powerful force in any society, regardless of culture or era. Its ability to dominate comes from its appeal to the physical and emotional make-up of people. It is corrupted into lust when integrated with inherent human pride and exerts its power to possess and weaken an individual so that person is made to be its servant. Now this problem becomes a life-controlling giant of sinfulness that must be slain rather than the edifying pleasure it was meant to be.

Sexual impropriety or sexual addiction is an evil that must be met head-on. Thus, it is a matter of human choice as oppose to our inherent nature. Once it is understood that this nature

can be changed then it comes down to a decision as whether we want to deal with it. However, if the goal of our lives is to be all Christ want us to be, it is essential that no spiritual enemy be left to harass and distract us. To experience full spiritual liberty, illicit sexual actions must be dealt with in a fearless and forthright manner. They should be honestly acknowledged as potentially dominant but they also must be recognized as always weaker than the power of the Holy Spirit. The first action taken by Moses was to seek the will of God. He needed the Lord's promise before he could put his army in the place to attack. Moses question would not be, "Should I attack?" but, "When should we attack?" Just because we should do something does not mean we are ready to do something. God's command to him was, "Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; and you shall do to him just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon." This divine assurance was the source for the personal bravery for those preparing to confront this giant and his army. This is a primary benefit of defeating fear. It did not take much prompting for them to act because they had learned the faithfulness of God to His Word. He had led them in the defeat of Sihon and He would do the same in regards to this obstacle.

To achieve the victory they would have attack him at the place of his greatest strength – Edrei, the capital city of Bashan. We cannot view sexual immorality as an acceptable character flaw or normal human behavior. It must be regarded as a sinful stronghold that corrupts the soul. As Israel assessed the imposing size of Og and the strength of his army (represented by the meaning of the name of Edrei) so we must acknowledge the firm grip sexual immorality has on our lives through our culture. It is a driving force in many areas of human existence and much of the media and arts are infiltrated with it. A Christian need not go to a strip club or visit a pornographic site on the internet to be assailed with sexual inferences and innuendos. We are assaulted amidst society's most innocuous settings; we are fed subconsciously from cartoons to commercials. Thus, it becomes very difficult to be unstained and, if sexual impurity is a major weakness in our lives, then the only choice we have is to attack the problem before it overwhelms and captivates us. Regrettably, it is not going away.

In Ps. 119:9-11, the psalmist asks the question, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” The answer lies in our regard for the Word of God. Is it something we highly esteem or is it a book of opinions and options when it runs counters to our fleshly desires? If we treasure the Word then we will invite it to rule over our hearts, which is the seat of human emotions. Ironically, the heart, if captivated by surrounding sexual influences, is also the source from which illicit desires can flow. Since light and darkness can have no communion something has to leave. That outcome is determined by the person. Paul instructed his young protégé to flee youthful lusts by pursuing Godly characteristics (2 Tim. 2:22). It was not enough to reject sin just because we are afraid of its consequences. When we act out of fear it will follow us in order to remain the center of attention. Timothy was told to pursue the things that would keep sinful desires at a distance. He was to intently desire righteousness, faith, love and peace. The way to attack sexual immorality is to pursue the things of Christ with the same fervor and effort we exercised for sin.

An example of this can be found in 2 Sam. 11:1-5. Verse 1 starts out, “Then it happened in the spring at the time when kings go out to battle.” If David had been where he should have been, the whole tragedy would not have happened. However, he sent someone else to do his job and he stayed in Jerusalem. Secondly, when he saw Bathsheba bathing he did something he should not have done – he stayed in the place of temptation. This was easy to do because his attention was not on his duties as the commander of the army. Finally, he acted on his urges rather than on his wisdom and the end result were the deaths of a child and three men (Uriah, Amnon and Absalom) and the rape and disgrace of his daughter Tamar. All these consequences happened because he did not attack lust by fleeing toward the things of God.

Israel’s battle with Og and its results closely mirrored the defeat of Sihon, in that the giant and his people were completely destroyed (vss. 3,6), the cities were all captured (vss. 4,5) and the spoil was taken (vs. 7). The conditions for victory were the same as the battle with Sihon. Anything that would be influential in the future had to be destroyed in the present. There was no “I will deal with it later” mentality. It would do no good for Israel to win the battle but leave a remnant alive that would later bring destruction from within. If the Lord is going to deal

with sexual immorality the same way He dealt with fear then we must do likewise. It requires the willingness to eradicate every influence that directs us away from Christ and toward temptation. The key to David's downfall with Bathsheba was three-fold. First, when he saw the woman bathing he stayed to watch. Thus, he remained in the position where the seed of lust could germinate. Secondly, he began to inquire about who the woman was. This showed an active interest in evil and fed the growing lust. Finally, he invited Bathsheba to his house, which gave opportunity for the sin to be consummated. At any point along this pathway to tragedy David could have stopped but he allowed the influences to remain until they took over the situation and created a disaster that went far beyond the original sin. The house sin builds is made of hundreds of little bricks. Seldom does an individual go from 'sainthood' to 'backslidden' in one large step. We must be aware of the fragile nature of human susceptibility. Paul warned the Corinthians to be aware of their surroundings and situations lest they fall into sin (1 Cor. 10:11-13). Temptation is the result of ungodly influences that is common to all. Just because we are born again does not mean we are above the vulnerability to be seduced by the sensual. There is an escape but its avenue leads through God's faithfulness and our willingness to deny wickedness an opportunity to appeal to the flesh. Halting sin in its infancy is much easier than trying to slay the dragon when it is full grown.

In describing the capture of the cities there was one slight difference in the Biblical accounts. After the defeat of Sihon, Moses said, "From Aroer which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon and from the city which is in the valley, even to Gilead, there was no city that was too high for us; the Lord our God delivered all over to us." After the defeat of Og, Moses declared, "All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars, besides a great many unwalled towns." This difference is distinctive. The formidability of fear is its imposing nature – the high walls. The difficulty in dealing with sexual immorality is its overt (unwalled cities) and covert aspects (the high walls). Jesus was addressing two issues when He said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery' but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart," (Matt. 5:27,28). The first was the secret nature of sexual sins. It is very possible to have a Godly outward appearance while being inwardly morally corrupt. In Jesus' time emphasis was unduly placed on outward

righteousness. A man was regarded by what could be seen as opposed to the content of his heart. Jesus told them that both the inward and the outward was important to the Father (Matt. 23:23). In today's culture it is easy to hide sexual sins from the public. Internet pornography and cable television bring it into our homes and make it accessible 24 hours a day. Therefore, it is easy to feed a habit without public scrutiny or criticism. However, just because people cannot see it does not make it right in God's sight (1 Sam. 16:6,7). It is not man who will be the ultimate arbitrator nor is it society that will set the standard by which we are judged. The Lord created intimacy between a man and a woman to be holy and made the marriage relationship a type of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-33). To the heavenly Father sex is not dirty but is the purest form of love because it involves trust, commitment and vulnerability. To twist it out of shape and make it filthy and shameful is the work of wickedness and, thus, is mostly executed away from public examination. That is why a person who has his private affairs exposed is always greatly embarrassed.

The second issue addressed by Jesus is the public manifestation of immorality. This entails calling good evil and evil good (Isa. 5:20). When the individual is hiding his sexual immorality it means a sense of shame or guilt is involved. In the long run, this makes it easier for the Holy Spirit to deal with. However, when sexual perversion is flaunted it becomes a more difficult issue because the ignorance of human pride has risen to a level where it presumes to determine morality and righteousness (Prov. 12:15; 21:2). No longer will the miscreant listen to wisdom; he has become foolish and desires others to give him approval. His only concern is for himself and disregards or justifies what harm the consequence of his actions does to others. A major catastrophe usually has to occur for this type of person to change and, even then, he will often blame others for his dilemma or expect them to exonerate him.

There is no doubt that these are daunting strongholds but they are able to be defeated when Christ arrives on the scene. In his prophecy concerning the devastating fall of King Jehoiakim of Judah, Jeremiah tells the people to go to Bashan and lament for all their lovers had been crushed (Jer. 22:18-23). Here is a clear reference to the sexual immorality associated with the region. Because of their hard heart and stubborn nature their lovers would be enslaved as

they had enslaved Israel. The final result would be shame and humiliation. The defeat of sexual perversion will be complete (Zech. 11:1-3). That which is considered impenetrable and unchangeable by society can be brought down by the Almighty. For this promise to be actuated we must be willing to have the walls of pride torn down and surrender to the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah declared that every proud and lofty thing will have a day of reckoning (Isa. 2:12-18). The prophet enumerated several things, including the oaks of Bashan, in which surrounding cities and nations took pride. If we are willing to have our sources of pride diminished and our idols eradicated then we will be able to defeat the spiritually degrading effects of sexual immorality. We also must be willing to live our lives in the open by being accountable to a trusted Christian friend. The ultimate sorrow is not in the sinful action; we are all susceptible to that. The real tragedy is accepting the past as a determiner of the future. This is not liberty. We must live in the truth that, “those who the Son sets free are free indeed,” and focus on Christ, establishing our goals according to His will.

As it was in the confrontation with Sihon, the purpose of the struggle with Og was the spoils of battle. The reward of conflict is not the conflict but the fruit of victory. In this modern culture, sexual purity is publicly demeaned. In order to combat these pressures we must have reasons to maintain our integrity that goes beyond our upbringing. This requires a Biblical understanding of the importance of sexual virtue. As in the victory over Sihon, the real spoil was not immediately evident to the people. Most certainly, there were objects of great material value and livestock to supply daily needs but the greatest spoil was the security the land provided. For the nation, the triumph meant a secure eastern border. Now they could move toward their ultimate purpose of conquering the Promise Land. For three tribes of Israel, the land provided sustenance for the present and hope for the future.

For us, the greatest blessing that is the result of victory over sexual immorality is the fulfilling quality of the purity of the sexual act. Virtue in all areas is essential for every believer but it is especially important in sexual matters. Purity is not prudishness but the complete contentment of genuine love. That means each individual has entered into the marriage covenant without fear or recrimination. It is not competition with its accompanying pressures but a

partnership with total trust. Sexual intimacy is given to us by God as the highest expression of devotion and affection. Degradation is the outcome when it becomes less than that. When we demand respect for our bodies, we challenge our partner's sincerity. If he/she rejects our standards or seeks to change them then the true heart of the person is revealed. Sex without a life-long commitment is the definition of prostitution. If he/she honors our standards, that means we are loved for who we truly are. The relationship becomes about the whole person, not just the body. Physical intimacy should be about the willingness to trust the partner with personal vulnerability. This implies confidence and commitment. If a partner is not in accord with these principles then he/she is treating the other like a prostitute. To them it is only an impersonal action motivated by the desire to gratify the flesh rather than the higher spiritual purpose. For human sexuality to have its highest meaning it must be preceded by a public expression of that commitment (Eph. 5:22-28). To participate in a sexual act for any lesser reason deprives it of its truest meaning and deepest blessing. When illicit sexual activities are eliminated then the reality of human love's greatest gift comes to the fore. Sexuality is a gift from the Lord when subjected to the light of truth and the love of Christ because truth gives it appropriate perspective and divine love gives it proper motivation. Now it becomes a blessing because its purpose is to build up the emotional nature of both parties, not just the selfish desires of one.

### **VERSES 12-17**

These verses describe the distribution of the Transjordan territory to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Their primary occupation was raising livestock and this fertile area was well-suited for their needs. However, when we look into the names and histories of each tribe's patriarch we get an insight into the ultimate blessings of the conquering the situation. Each son was born into a perplexing and frustrating situation, yet all three names are positive proclamations of gratitude to God.

Reuben (see, a son) is mentioned first. He was the first born of Jacob but his mother Leah was not the favorite wife (Gen. 29:30-32). Her sorrow was the sad reality of being unloved due to Jacob's affection for her older sister Rachel. Her lament, "Because the Lord has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me," reflected an anguished emotional state and a

hopeful heart. This travail turned into a bitter rivalry, which caused much pain. After Leah bore three more sons, Rachel grew frustrated at her infertility and gave her personal servant Bilhah to Jacob as a wife (Gen. 30:1-4). In those days, any child born of the maid-servant was considered as being birthed by the mistress. The concubine produced two sons, which gave Rachel some degree of satisfaction, “With mighty wrestling I have wrestled with my sister and I have indeed prevailed,” (Gen. 30:8). Leah then retaliated by giving her maid Zilpah to Jacob as a concubine (Gen. 30:9-11). In the midst of this emotional tug-of-war Gad (fortune) was born. Even though she had bested her sister once again, the meaning of his name was as much a declaration of joy as it was an expression of rivalry. These two half-brothers were connected through the on-going battle of envy between two sisters, who were vying for the affections of one man. When they were born somehow they alleviated the frustration and loneliness Leah was undergoing. She saw them as God’s reward for the heartache of her desert experience.

It is symbolic that their descendants shared an inheritance in the land that once belonged to Sihon, who represents Israel’s battle with fear. The significance of Reuben and Gad sharing the same inheritance reveals an important truth. Nothing creates a greater atmosphere for anxiety than the fear of not being loved. The desire to love and be loved is a primary motivation in every person’s life. No one wants to go through life alone. This provides circumstances in which many mistake become possible and Satan greatly exploits. However, God provides a refuge for the lonely (Ps. 68:5,6). Jesus calls the hurting unto Himself (Jn. 10:7-10). In His pasture we find rest for our souls (Matt. 11:28-30). Since the soul is the repository of all human emotions, the rest Jesus offers is far greater than physical rest. It is a divine peace that calms the innermost turmoil so we can hear the expressions of Christ’s love for us. As Leah needed the love of her husband so we need the love of our Savior. If Satan can block the divine message of affection through fear then he can keep us in turmoil. With the defeat of fear comes the revelation of how blessed we are to be the children of God. By giving Reuben and Gad the land once dominated by fear, the Lord was illustrating that there is richness in store for those who will persevere, regardless of the brokenness of their old life. By giving us the shelter of the Holy Spirit we enjoy the fullness of the sweet presence of our loving and good Shepherd (Ps. 61:1-4).

Manasseh (causing to forget) was the oldest son of Joseph (Gen. 41:50,51). He was born to a confused Joseph who was experiencing God's blessing in a foreign land. He evidently assumed the Lord had placed him in Egypt and he was determined to make the best of it. This is how he always handled his travails, even during his time of slavery and imprisonment. There was no doubt that he missed his family but he was willing to put up with it if this is what the Lord had established for him. This was Joseph's way of saying that it was well with his soul. The half-tribe that came from Manasseh settled in the place where sexual immorality had been emphasized. The irony was the similarity between Joseph in Egypt and Manasseh in the land of the Amorites. Joseph resisted sexual impropriety and was imprisoned for two years for his standards. It took a dream warning of a pending agricultural abundance and famine to bring him out of prison and into the richness of Pharaoh's house. Manasseh was part of the army that defeated Og who, in many ways, represented a sexual culture. As a result of their faithfulness in the lean times they were given the rich and fertile country of Bashan.

One of the foremost outcomes of loneliness is the willingness to lower one's standards in order to be attractive. This is a shortcut to acceptance that eventually becomes a road that leads to sorrow (Prov. 5:3-6). The results of improper sexual behavior are shattered lives and broken dreams. None of these things are taken into account while the temptation was presenting itself. It seemed like the opportune thing to do and, since it was consensual, what harm was in it? But the path of unrighteousness always ends in unintended consequences (Prov. 14:12).

Abstaining from sinful sexual gratification may be a very difficult thing to do but it produces the best results ultimately. For Joseph, it was the fulfilling of a dream planted in his heart by God many years previous. For Manasseh, it was a territory with more than enough space and vegetation to meet their earthly needs. For you and me, it prevents tragic consequences that can confine our lives and crush our hopes. Sexual wisdom is the freedom to see the whole picture and experience life in a way that will bear few regrets. It provides more than enough space, opportunity and time to achieve a life filled with accomplishment and excitement.

### **VERSES 18-20**

With this blessing came responsibilities. After the defeat of Sihon and Og a shift would occur in the focus and leadership of Israel. From verse 18 to the end of the chapter, the Bible addresses three types of people in mature leadership positions: the ones who have settled into their ministries, those who are about to ascend into leadership and those who are about to pass the mantle to the next generation.

Moses addressed the tribes who had already received their portion of the Promised Land. Though they had nothing to gain personally from any further conquest of Canaan, they were still required to honor their promise to help others receive their inheritance. Their own possessions were going to be secure because any enemy strong enough to threaten them had been eliminated. The Lord promised the well-being of their families and livestock until the other members of their nation had been given rest in the land they were to possess. Only then would their responsibility be complete.

In the Deuteronomy account possession is equated with rest. This does not mean the cessation of struggle because, in many ways, the battle has just begun; it would just take on another form. The need for armed conflict would have essentially stopped, though there would be small battles to protect what they had conquered. The larger test would be the day-to-day routines of life and the determination to resist spiritual degradation as the remnants of the pagan religions would endeavor to entice the people. Unless the nation was secure in its purpose, the opportunity remained for confusion to oppress and distract. In this context, Scripture is describing the spiritual rest of knowing and experiencing God's will. This is the commitment and determination to be what God wants us to be and do what He wants to do. This gives us the peace that comes with the end of the conflict between the human and divine wills and our hearts' submission to His design for our lives. It calms the turmoil because there is now a single thought that is controlled by heaven. This makes God's desire the only desire and settles us into a part of the overall plan of the omnipotent Lord, ending the human urge to be all of it.

The body of Christ must resist the temptation of empire building. For the church to succeed it must truly "esteem others better than themselves." This means the sharing of tasks and responsibilities. Paul describes Christians as the body of Christ, which means that all of us

are part of the same overall effort and under the same authority (1 Cor. 12:12-14; Col. 1:18). One of the purposes of an established ministry is to be of assistance to other parts of the body. There is no ministry on earth that is a repository of all divine blessing. They are all to be giving in nature (Eph. 2:19-22). This Christ-like attitude eliminates selfishness and envy, which leads to disunity. The faithfulness of the tribes of the Transjordan would serve as an inspiration and example to the other Israelites (Josh. 22:1-8). It also created a bond of trust that would hold them in good stead in the future (Josh. 22:10-34).

### **VERSES 21,22**

Moses gave instructions to Joshua, who would have the duty to take Israel to the next level of achievement. He was told to remember four things. First, he was instructed to remember his past. He had been actively involved in the defeat of two nations who were much stronger and more experienced than Israel. Despite the odds against his army, he had seen God's power manifested in their defeat. Secondly, he was to remember the promise that God would do to the nations of Canaan what He did to the two kings east of Jordan. Third, he was not to allow fear to play any part of his decision-making process. Fear was a defeated foe and Joshua needed to keep it that way. Finally, he was to remember that he was never going into confrontation with any enemy by himself; the battle was already won as long as the Lord was fighting for him. He may need to prepare the army and make plans for the encounter but the most important thing he could do was obey. The victory had already been declared it; was just a matter of process.

Another essential activity of mature leadership is to encourage those who will take our place when we are removed from the scene. Part of the vitality of ministry is in its constant evolution. One generation should take from the previous one that which is good and wise. The older ministers should take the younger ones under their wings and try to give them the advantage of their experience and wisdom. They should help them by reminding them of the eternal truths that are the same, regardless of time, people or place.

Moses told Joshua, "Your eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings." By doing this, the aged leader reminded his protégé of the importance of the past. It

is not a place to dwell in but is a perspective from which he can view the future. Secondly, he is to remember that, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.” What He has done to the enemy in the past He will continue to do in the future. Third, Moses encouraged Joshua not to be afraid of fear. Up to this point, Joshua had been a brave commander but he had always been under Moses’ authority. On the west bank of Jordan, he would be the one with the ultimate leadership responsibility. He would be sending men into battle, putting them in harm’s way. This would require a different mindset. Moses had to learn this in the desert standing before a burning bush. Joshua would learn it standing before the imposing walls of Jericho. Fear cannot be a part of planning as long as God’s will is the primary consideration. Finally, Joshua was encouraged to keep foremost in his life and thought process, “The Lord your God is the one fighting for you.” Enfolding ourselves in that truth makes every confrontation an opportunity and every battle a victory. This makes the impossible possible and the challenging exciting, which means failure is not an option. A young minister is, by definition, one without experience and only experience proves truth. It should be the joy as well as the duty of every veteran minister to help provide the assurance of wisdom established through a lifetime of observation and participation.

### **VERSES 23-29**

Moses may have been 120 years old but he showed his youthful spirit by telling the Lord, “Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand.” He was just beginning to see the fullness of the Lord and wanted more. But God said, “Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter.” What an irony when we remember that Moses’ first response to the divine call was, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, not since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue,” (Ex. 4:10). He wanted God to send someone else and leave him to his life in the desert. This alone shows the power of the Holy Spirit to change a life. However, as much as Moses had changed, he was still instructed to yield the mantle of authority. His job now was do all he could to acknowledge and encourage the next generation of leaders. His time was passed; his task was complete. He would be allowed to look into the future but he would not be allowed to dwell in it. It was time

for Joshua to take over and the nation to know that he was the next anointed commander. There would be no changing the Lord's mind because the new leader would be a type of Christ that Moses could not be. Moses would be an illustration of Jesus the Redeemer; Joshua would be an illustration of Jesus the Conqueror. Moses would represent deliverance from slavery; Joshua would represent the completion of divine purpose. Moses' last public act was to encourage and strengthen the one who was to follow, not as a clone of his ministry but as a leader of his own generation.

There comes a time in the ministry of every leader when he is to lay aside the office. This does not mean he is finished working for the Lord. His contribution is still needed but his job description has changed. He moves from one in a position of authority to one who encourages and strengthens the next generation. This means he must voluntarily give up power while keeping a servant's heart. He acknowledges that he is limited to his call and is not to assume the place of another. He should be a competent workman who has built in such a way that someone else can effectively build on his foundation. If he has done that, then what he will have striven for all his life will continue and flourish. He should never be jealous of his successor or critical of what it will take to reach the rising generation. The task of Joshua was completely different than the one given to Moses. Moses had the 40-year responsibility of preparation. He would die before Israel would have a permanent home. The Lord allowed him to see that there was an enduring place for his nation. However, it would be Joshua who would lead them there. Moses would have to be satisfied with that. The saddest epitaph of a minister is, "He destroyed what he built." That can only happen if he overstays his time of effective service or overdoes what he is called to do. The next leader is not the enemy of the previous minister; he is the crown of the successful one.