



*Joshua
and
Caleb*

Unconquerable Faith

Andreas Dura

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Joshua: Trust in God's Power

Let's open the book of *Joshua*, chapter 11. In the past, we have often studied about the people of Israel and how they entered the land of Canaan. We saw a parallel to God's people in the last days and their entrance into the heavenly Canaan.

We studied their release from Egyptian bondage and the delay in the wilderness. We saw the parallel of the release of God's people from Babylon and their delay in the wilderness.

We saw the up and down experience of the Israelites and how many of them died in the wilderness. Then we studied their passage through the river Jordan and also their detour around Edom, which again was an interesting story.

I would like to continue the story somewhat to a part that we have not considered so much, but which has a parallel to us today, and that is the part found in the book of *Joshua*.

The first few chapters are mostly about the conquest of the main city which was Jericho. Then the story moves on to the conquest of Ai, a very important episode. Then come further conquests and stories which are full of lessons for today.

Let's begin with *Joshua* 11 which starts off reporting about a war. The Canaanites didn't give up so easily despite the defeat of Jericho. There was a king named Jabin who was determined to rally all of the Canaanites against Israel.

Joshua 11

¹ And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard these things, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph,

² And to the kings who were from the north, in the mountains, in the plain south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and

in the heights of Dor on the west,

³ To the Canaanites in the east and in the west, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite in the mountains, and the Hivite below Hermon in the land of Mizpah.

⁴ So they went out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots.

⁵ And when all these kings had met together, they came and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

Until this point Israel hadn't met such a large army. It was a real challenge to their faith. This army was not only bigger, but was better armed than Israel. It says in verse 4, "...with very many horses and chariots."

Horses and Chariots

Horses and chariots back then gave their owners quite an advantage. The Egyptians had apparently developed the use of the horse and chariot, which was instrumental in their becoming a world power in their day. Later, their military power was destroyed at the Red Sea.

You know the story of how they pursued the Israelites, then their wheels became bogged down in the mud, and finally the water pounded down over them and destroyed everything. All that was left were the weapons on the dead bodies of those who were washed ashore, and the Israelites took possession of these. So that was where Israel's weaponry came from.

Until that point in their history, Israel had never waged war with anyone. But now they had the Egyptians' weapons, although they didn't have any of their horses and chariots which had been destroyed.

God had told them that they should not acquire horses and chariots. This had nothing to do with the fact that they hadn't had the time or opportunity thus far.

So they were busy conquering the land when suddenly this massive army with horses and chariots is marshaled against them. That army had quite an advantage. Today you could compare it to an army that had tanks, while the smaller army had only military jeeps.

Joshua 11

⁶ But the Lord said to Joshua, Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.

Normally a conquering army would take possession of such weaponry to give itself an advantage. They remembered how they had taken the weapons from the dead Egyptians on the shore. They saw that as the spoils of war. But now they were told to destroy this booty.

⁷ So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and they attacked them.

⁸ And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who defeated them and chased them to Greater Sidon, to the Brook Misrephoth, and to the Valley of Mizpah eastward; they attacked them until they left none of them remaining.

⁹ So Joshua did to them as the Lord had told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

¹⁰ Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms.

¹¹ And they struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with fire.

Then it goes on to report more of Joshua's conquests, but I want to come back to the burning of the chariots and laming of the horses and ask:

“Why did God command this?”

God had already told them not to acquire horses and chari-

ots. We can read about this in *Deuteronomy 17*. This verse pertains to a future king who didn't exist at that time, but God had said that they would want a king.

After Joshua's conquests and the land was divided, he withdrew and was no longer the leader and never became a king. Each tribe was responsible for conquering the Canaanites who lived in its respective region. The wars were no longer led by just one general.

But let's consider God's prophecy about a future king. God knew they wouldn't stay as they were and would one day want a king. You know the story from *1 Samuel* when the people asked Samuel for a king and refused to heed his warnings against the plan.

Deuteronomy 17

¹⁴ When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me.

That's exactly what they said. It happened just as God had prophesied. I have to ask myself, did the people who made this request even knew of this prophecy that they were fulfilling? Or perhaps they knew of it and used it as a justification.

¹⁵ You shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

¹⁶ But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, You shall not return that way again.

Why did God single this out as something they shouldn't do? An answer can be found here:

Psalm 20

⁶ Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven. With the saving strength of His right hand.

⁷ Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

Can we sense why God was so careful to tell Israel not to multiply horses when they obtained a king? It was because whoever has many horses and chariots will become dependent upon them.

I asked myself why God didn't counsel against bows and arrows, or swords and spears, which were the things they took from the Egyptians. Obviously God didn't deal with Israel's problems all at once. He led them step by step. He knew the weaknesses of His people, the weaknesses of humanity, and He led them as far as He could in order to help them. He was saying, "At least don't do that."

David was the first king to acquire a small number of horses and chariots.

2 Samuel 8

³ David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his territory at the River Euphrates.

⁴ David took from him one thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Also David hamstrung all the chariot horses, except that he spared enough of them for one hundred chariots.

He lamed the horses because that was obviously the will of God, who had said the king was not to multiply horses. He didn't do this just to be cruel. Israel's kings were not to make use of horses and chariots in war. But David did retain one hundred of them and one hundred chariots.

His successor, Solomon, acquired many more than this and became quite powerful in a military sense. And the kings who came after him had more yet, even more than some of their allies, and they were quite advanced in their military power in this way.

It is interesting how this kept developing step by step. It

started with a few and grew from there. And as you know, the kings that came after also depended less on God and more on their military power.

Depending on God or on Flesh

Let's read some texts to this effect. The first that might come to your mind is:

Jeremiah 17

⁵ Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.

That has always been the biggest problem for the people of God. And in all of Israel's conquests that was their problem. We saw this at the conquest of Ai when they depended upon their own strength. At that time they hadn't departed from the Lord in heart as such, but there was a bad seed there that grew. And when they acquired a king, it grew even more.

Incidentally, Solomon actually purchased horses and chariots from Egypt. He wasn't satisfied with what he had and wanted to buy more.

⁵ Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.

We could read much more about this, but it is just a sample that represents the whole tenor of the Bible.

Psalms 33

¹⁶ No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength.

¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.

Medical Missionary Work

Now comes the important question. What are the horses and chariots today?

God, in these last days, wants to work particularly through the medical missionary work. He wants to help and bless people today just as Jesus did when He traveled around and healed people.

And today we can see that the world has developed protective systems, that is, horses and chariots. This can definitely be seen in the medical system, but God does not want us to depend upon these. He doesn't want us to become blinded by these things, but rather recognize that help comes alone from Him.

This is at least one parallel between the past and today which became very clear to me. You could read the verse this way:

“No doctor is saved by the multitude of his sophisticated medicines; a good doctor cannot save through his great knowledge. Apparatus is vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.”

That is what God wants to tell us through the events in history. This is what we must see in it, particularly when we are talking about the conquest of Canaan. We must see what it was that led the people, step by step, away from God.

Let's read another verse.

Psalm 44

⁵ Through You we will push down our enemies; through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us.

What are these enemies today? They are sin and sickness. These are the enemies against which we fight.

“Through You we will push down sin and sickness; through Your name we will trample these two things which rise up against us.”

⁶ For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me.

That is exactly what God wanted to tell Israel when He

held them back from horses and chariots. He wanted them not to rely upon the apparatus of war.

Psalm 44

⁷ But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who hated us.

⁸ In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever. Selah.

There is another text I would like to read.

Psalm 125

¹ Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

² As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever.

These are all verses that show how pivotal it is in our experience to depend upon God in every respect.

David and Goliath

So we could read one story after another where the enemies of God gathered together, but one very interesting account is the story of David and Goliath. This portrays two systems facing each other in combat. One system relies upon the arm of flesh. The other relies upon God.

The outcome of this battle has been given us so that we might really understand what it means to depend upon the arm of flesh. Before David entered the battle, with his unwavering faith, the Israelites trembled before Goliath, because they did not rely wholly upon God. And so with us, if we do not rely wholly upon God, we will be even weaker than our “enemies”, which are predominantly “sin and sickness”.

Another interesting text is:

Proverb 21

²⁹ A wicked man hardens his face, but as for the upright, he establishes his way.

³⁰ There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against

the Lord.

³¹ The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord.

Now let's read this:

Isaiah 30

¹⁵ For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

¹⁶ But you would not, and you said, No, for we will flee on horses—Therefore you shall flee! And, We will ride on swift horses—Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!

¹⁷ One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain and as a banner on a hill.

Weaker Than Our Enemies

We need to be aware of the fact that when we rely on the arm of flesh, we become weaker than our enemies. That's a fact that might not be seen immediately. It might appear that if we rely on horses and chariots we will have an advantage.

Israel was quite afraid of its enemies' horses and chariots. When the land was divided, the tribe of Ephraim wanted more than was allocated, so they were told to conquer their enemies in order to obtain more, but they excused themselves because of the horses and iron chariots that their enemies possessed. They felt defeated before they even began.

We need to ask ourselves: Do we feel defeated already? If so, then that isn't good. Where does our strength really lie? Our strength consists in God's leadership and power whether it pertains to agriculture, a health food store, missionary work, or our battle against sin and sickness.

Quietness and Confidence

What we also need to understand in particular is that God's methods are not carried out with great pomp, nor are

they made stronger by a connection with the methods of the world. Rather, God wants us to work one on one. He wants to work through unimposing means and thus accomplish much because the strength will be seen as coming from Him.

“In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”

This is what must be revealed. So that is one of the lessons we can gain from *Joshua* 11.

To summarize, the Canaanites, Israel’s enemies, assembled an army in order to attack Israel, and God won the victory without horses or chariots. As the Israelites took the spoils, they destroyed the chariots and lamed the horses in order not to take ownership of them and instead express their full reliance on God.

Faith and the Casting of Lots

After the battle against the horses and chariots there followed many more conquests, after which the land was finally divided. We come now to the division of the land, where we also find very important lessons. This story begins as follows:

Joshua 13

¹ Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

By the way, Joshua and Caleb were the oldest men there. They were the only ones who had survived through the forty years wandering in the desert. As you remember, these two spies gave a different report from the other ten. For that reason God told them they would see the Promised Land.

When the Bible states that Joshua was very old, this was absolutely true in comparison to the rest of the Israelites. Compared to Methuselah, he was not, but in Joshua's time people did not reach such old ages. For his day and environment, Joshua was really very old compared to the others.

We also read here that Joshua still had a task to do. His task would no longer be to lead armies. Even though he was the oldest of them all, he still led Israel in battle against their enemies. But that was no longer to be his work.

In the last chapter, I briefly mentioned that God now wanted to give the tribes the task of conquering their individual portions of the land, instead of leading a common army against their enemies. The text goes on to explain that the enemies would be driven out. Then it says:

Joshua 13

⁶ Only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you.

They were to cast lots to divide the land. Every tribe was to receive a particular area of land, and the lot was to decide which area they would have. This is written here, as well as being repeated in chapter 14:

Joshua 14

¹ These are the areas which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed as an inheritance to them...

The Israelites came together and cast lots. We don't know exactly how it happened, as that is not reported. There was one way of casting a lot, which was by using the Urim and Thummim on the High Priest's breastplate, but it doesn't seem as though that is referred to here, as it is not specifically mentioned. Whatever the other methods of casting lots were—whether stones, or something similar—the division was by lot.

² Their inheritance was by lot, as the Lord had commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe.

Now just imagine that you are told to move to another city, not knowing which house you will receive since you cannot look at it beforehand. A lot will simply be cast, and whatever lot you receive is where you have to move. Would you accept that?

“You're lucky—you've received a better lot than I have!”

Wouldn't such thoughts arise?

“I have such bad luck! I've been given a poor lot.”

The psalmist says something surprising about lots:

Psalm 16

⁶ The lines [or, *lots*] have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.

Most people imagine that they have received a hard lot. But here is someone who says:

“I have received a good lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.”

Not by Chance

When God commanded His people to cast the lot, it was not a matter of chance. What is chance, anyway? For example, many people flip coins to see whether they land heads or tails up. That is just chance. If you throw a dice, it is just chance whether it lands on one, six, five, or four. Was that the case here too? Does God divide land in that way? Absolutely not.

Actually, the land they were to receive had already been promised to them. If you read *Genesis* 49, you will see how Jacob already promised the land to his various sons. He did not state the exact borders, but rather he described the land. He actually indicated exactly where they would live. For instance, he said one tribe would live by the sea. Moses did precisely the same thing in *Deuteronomy* 33. He also described the twelve tribes—before they went into Canaan—and outlined the inheritance of each one.

Although the land was already divided, the lot was still cast. Israel might have said that since they had the words of Jacob and Moses, they would divide the land accordingly. But no; the lot was cast, and the lot must have been in agreement with the words of Jacob and Moses. This shows that in this case, the casting of lots was not a product of chance—just as with the Urim and Thummim, where the one would glow or the other would be clouded. It was not chance, but indeed led by God instead.

Are there other examples of when God spoke through lots? The story of Achan, also described in Joshua, is one. He was found to be guilty through the casting of lots. Israel’s first king, Saul, was chosen by the lot, though in this case God had

again clearly prophesied the result. Still the lot was used. Another example is that of the goats on the Day of Atonement—one for the Lord and one scapegoat—which were also chosen by lots.

God is omniscient and knows everything in advance. If something is communicated through lots, God knows it beforehand. He foreknows everything. Yet He still allows the lot to be cast.

Then why don't we cast lots today? Next time we have the question of whether to move to a certain place or start a new job, let's cast lots. Have we ever done that? No. Why not? Obviously, it is no longer the way in which God communicates today.

The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that if the lot is cast today, Satan will control it. If we were to determine something by flipping a coin, for example, Satan would influence the situation in order to bring in his way. We have other ways and means by which God communicates today. What is the most important way? I think we know already—it is through His Word.

Leading Through Circumstances

Why did God work in such a way back then? What did God want to communicate at that time? The purpose of casting lots was to determine certain circumstances. In this case, they could have written the name of each tribe on a stone and then put all the stones into a basket. Then they would call out a certain area of land and draw a stone to match each tribe to the area of land. This all has to do with particular circumstances.

Today God also leads through circumstances—not through the lot, but through other circumstances. God wants us to have open eyes for His leading. I fear that we are far too superficial today to recognize our lot. Even in those days, there

were those—such as the members of Ephraim’s tribe—who were not content with their lot. They called it chance and wanted things done another way.

There will always be some who are discontent with God’s leading and the circumstances which He allows, because they wish a better lot for themselves.

We also talk of luck. “I was lucky there,” we say, or “That was just bad luck!” That means I am either in good or bad circumstances. That’s how we could translate it in today’s language.

But what does God want to show us with our lot, or circumstances? And how does He want to show it to us? If we consider our lives merely as a matter of chance—just calling it bad or good luck when something happens—then we are blind, absolutely blind. We see nothing at all.

We must really ask ourselves, where is the hand of God in our life? Our lot is not a product of chance; it is God’s guiding hand. God leads us according to what we can understand. He also led the Israelites of old in a way they could understand.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 370-371:

As the Bible presents two laws, one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary, so there are two covenants. The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. To all men this covenant offered pardon and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God’s law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation.

This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was ac-

counted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God's law. The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Genesis 17:1. The testimony of God concerning His faithful servant was, "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Genesis 26:5. And the Lord declared to him, "I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee."

Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith...

Another compact—called in Scripture the "old" covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the "second," or "new," covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant. That the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God—the "two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie." Hebrews 6:18.

But if the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai?

This is essentially the same question which Paul asks in *Galatians* 3. And the reason is given here:

In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal to them His power and His mercy, that they might be led to love and trust Him. He brought them down to the Red Sea—where, pursued by the Egyptians, escape seemed impossible—that they might realize their utter helplessness, their need of divine aid; and then He wrought deliverance for them. Thus they were filled with love and gratitude to God

and with confidence in His power to help them. He had bound them to Himself as their deliverer from temporal bondage.

They could have said,

“We were just lucky. A wind came up, dividing the water, and we were able to get through quickly. The Egyptians simply didn’t make it behind us. It happened just at the last minute!”

Or, they could have said,

“That was God’s leading. That was our lot which He cast for us and gave us.”

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 371:

But there was a still greater truth to be impressed upon their minds. Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God’s law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught.

God brought them to Sinai; He manifested His glory; He gave them His law, with the promise of great blessings on condition of obedience: “If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then...ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Exodus 19:5, 6. The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God’s law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” Exodus 24:7.

Somehow they could not see the signs of the times. They did not understand their circumstances. They had previously had such a fear of God that they told Moses to speak with Him in their stead. And yet, they thought they could do everything. But they couldn’t, as Joshua told them:

Joshua 24

¹⁹ And Joshua said unto the people, You cannot serve the

Lord: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 371:

They had witnessed the proclamation of the law in awful majesty, and had trembled with terror before the mount; and yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken; and now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the Saviour revealed in the Abrahamic covenant and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now by faith and love they were bound to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant.

In other words, God led them through circumstances which opened their eyes. He led them through the Red Sea, gave them manna, as well as so many other visible things. He also gave the lot.

Despite the fact that the land was already promised and divided through Jacob and Moses, the lot was still cast. With that, God confirmed again what He had said in His word. God does that today as well. He speaks His will to us through His word and then confirms it again through circumstances. That is how He helps us. He wants to build our faith.

The Word Alone

The more we learn to trust Him—as Israel had to learn to trust Him at the Red Sea—the less we need the lot, the less we need circumstances. We can trust Him more and more, just because He speaks to us.

I want to mention a few examples. One is Abraham, who was commanded by God to move to another country. Those were also bleak circumstances for Abraham.

“How can I support my large family? Will there be pas-

ture in the new country? And who knows if I can buy anything there, or if our currency will be useless? What do I have to barter with? Perhaps there are warlike people there! Surely there must be.”

And so on. There were many questions, but Abraham did not worry about these circumstances. The word was the only thing that counted for him. God had said,

“Go into a country which I will show you.”

Abraham is an example of a man who relied completely on God’s word. We can also especially see this in the sacrifice of Isaac. That was a circumstance which seemed to contradict all human feelings and logic:

“Go and sacrifice your son, whom you love.”

But only the word mattered. The same was true with Jesus in the wilderness of temptation. The word was,

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The circumstances spoke a completely different language. But Jesus relied on the word.

That is the goal to which God wanted to lead the children of Israel. He gave them the lot at first; but He wanted to lead them to rely more and more on His word. Yet He knew that they were not ready to do that yet.

Not By Our Inclinations

Let’s really ask the question, how does God speak to us today? And let us listen to Him. We can read another interesting text in this connection in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, about Balaam:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 440:

There are thousands at the present day who are pursuing a similar course [a similar course to Balaam]. They would have no difficulty in understanding their duty if it were in harmony with their inclinations.

That is exactly the problem. They would recognize what God wants if it only agreed with their inclinations.

It is plainly set before them in the Bible or is clearly indicated by circumstances and reason. But because these evidences are contrary to their desires and inclinations they frequently set them aside and presume to go to God to learn their duty. With great apparent conscientiousness they pray long and earnestly for light...

How illogical! But that's exactly how it is. We must ask ourselves whether our eyes are open. Do we really see which lot God has chosen for us? Do we hear His voice and what He says to us? Or are our wishes and tendencies so strong that we suppress it, and then ask God to show us our duty?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 440:

But God will not be trifled with. He often permits such persons to follow their own desires and to suffer the result.

Here we see the old covenant. God bears it, allows it, and lets them go in this way. But still He does not leave them completely alone. He also speaks through the consequences of their own actions. God speaks to us through blessings; when we don't appreciate them, then He speaks to us through blessings removed. But he still speaks. He wants us to live and not die.

Psalm 81

¹¹ My people would not hearken to My voice, and Israel would none of Me.

¹² So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

The awful part is that when someone—like Balaam, for example—is so far away from God that he no longer hears His voice, he continues in the same direction step by step, not allowing his mind to be changed. That means that the lots are of no value to him anymore. They become just a thing of pure chance for him now.

Today, we no longer cast lots, and we cannot concentrate on every little circumstance, saying,

“God must want it this or that way.”

Instead, we need to see we are on the battlefield of the great controversy. Satan also has an interest in manipulating circumstances to hinder the work. We will experience this again and again. We cannot say that all circumstances are given by God in every detail. But nevertheless, we can say that the circumstances, as they happen, are overruled by God.

We Have a Place in the Plan

I'd like to read a statement about this now in *Prophets and Kings*, which describes the vision that Ezekiel had in *Ezekiel* chapters 1 and 10—that of the whirlwind with wheels within wheels.

Prophets and Kings, p. 535-536:

Upon the banks of the river Chebar, Ezekiel beheld a whirlwind seeming to come from the north, “a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber.” ... As the wheel-like complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth.

The history of nations speaks to us today. To every nation and to every individual [including you and me] God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being tested by the plummet [or, *lot*] in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes.

The prophecies which the great I AM has given in His word, uniting link after link in the chain of events, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future, tell us where we are today in the procession of the ages and what may be expected in the time to come. All that prophecy has foretold as

coming to pass, until the present time, has been traced on the pages of history, and we may be assured that all which is yet to come will be fulfilled in its order.

Here it speaks of prophecy. But it is not merely about great nations or events; rather, it is about every individual person:

“To every individual God has assigned a place in His great plan.”

He directs our steps. It is obvious that people separate themselves from God. Despite this, He still speaks to them through the lot. Do we want to see this? Do we want to open our eyes? The decision is ours. We could chalk everything up to chance, or we can say,

“Here is God’s leading. He wants to tell me something.”

That is clearly our choice. All this and more I see in the experience of Israel when they used the lot to divide the land.

Another word about this in the Bible is found in *John 20*. This is the story of Thomas. He saw the Lord after he had doubted. After seeing Jesus’ wounds from the nails, and after putting his hand in Christ’s side, Thomas said,

“My Lord and my God.”

That was the first time that Thomas saw Him—the other disciples had already seen Him.

John 20

²⁹ Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

That is what God ultimately wants to lead us to. He wants us to see the lot—the circumstances—in our lives. But He wants to lead us to the point where we rely only on His word. And we will come to a point when naked faith—a faith where we can see absolutely nothing—will be necessary in order to do the work of God. There will be no more lots. We will really

have to go forward by faith alone.

Caleb: Faith in the Word

Now we want to go back to the story of Joshua in order to see that there were also people at that time who completely relied upon the word of God.

Joshua 14

⁶ Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea.

⁷ I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart.

⁸ Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God.

⁹ So Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.

¹⁰ And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old.

¹¹ As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in.

¹² Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.

¹³ And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance.

¹⁴ Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly

followed the Lord God of Israel.

¹⁵ And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim). Then the land had rest from war.

It is interesting that this was the exact city where the giants lived. When the spies went to look at the land, they came back full of stories of the giants and how the land devoured its inhabitants and that the Israelites would have no chance to conquer it (see *Numbers* 13). And that land was precisely what Caleb wanted.

Who was Caleb? What kind of a man was he? First of all, he was 85 years old—the oldest of all the Israelites. The rest were relatively young. They were probably not older than 65, as the others had died in the wilderness. In any case, Caleb and Joshua were the oldest by far. Yet Caleb still said,

“I am just as strong as back then. Please give me the most difficult piece of land.”

What a statement! We can look a little deeper now at who Caleb was. There are several indications given in the Bible:

Numbers 32

¹¹ Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me,

¹² Except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the Lord.

A Descendant of Esau

We read already that Caleb was named as the son of Jephunneh, who was a Kenizzite. Who were the Kenizzites? They were descendants of Kenaz, who were descendants of Esau:

Genesis 36

⁹ And this is the genealogy of Esau the father of the

Edomites in Mount Seir.

¹⁰ These were the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, and Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau.

¹¹ And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

These were the Kenizzites, and Jephunneh was a Kenizzite—in other words, a descendant of Esau. The descendants of Esau were the Edomites, so Caleb was an Edomite in Israel. Interestingly, he was a leader of the Jews!

How did this happen? He had an inheritance in Israel because he was faithful to God. That shows, more than anything else, that God is not a respecter of persons. God does not say,

“You are not my son because you are not descended from Jacob.”

But instead, Caleb was fully a part of the Israelites—even a leader who received the responsibility for the tribe of Judah. That was the role of Caleb back then. We can read another text about this:

Joshua 15

¹³ Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a share among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, namely, Kirjath Arba, which is Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak).

¹⁴ Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there: She-shai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak.

Do you remember the children of Anak—the giants?

¹⁵ Then he went up from there to the inhabitants of Debir (formerly the name of Debir was Kirjath Sepher).

¹⁶ And Caleb said, He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife.

¹⁷ So Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife.

Very interesting! That means that we are dealing with a

man who comes from the mixed multitude—from a foreign people. And he fully became a part of the people of Israel. There were also others from outside Israel—the relatives of Moses, for instance. Moses married a woman from Midian. They became a part of the people too. Therefore Israel was no longer formed solely from the tribes of Jacob.

The foreigners were frequently a cause of rebellion because often they were not truly converted. But here, in Caleb, we have an example of someone who followed God fully and was in fact an example, a great example, for the people of Israel. That gives me much joy. Why? Because it shows that with God there is no respecting of persons. Anyone can be an example for the people of God.

Caleb Claims the Promise

Why did Caleb want that piece of land in particular? Was he not content with the lot? Yes, but this lot was obviously not very specific—for example, in regard to the city where the children of Anak were. And Caleb specifically wanted this piece. Why did he want it?

God had promised it. Caleb relied fully on the word of God. The lot did not contradict it; but the word was the decisive factor here. And God had already promised it to him:

Deuteronomy 1

¹ Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers,

² Except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the Lord.

Obviously, this was the land that Caleb had personally gone to during his time as a spy. He was there, and God had told him,

“I will give you that exact piece of land.”

And now Caleb claimed it.

“That is what God promised me. And for that reason, I want to have it.”

Interestingly, this was no selfish request. He could have gone alone, but he didn’t do this. Instead, the leaders of Judah went together with him and laid out this plan, claiming God’s promise. And it was given to him immediately. It was obvious that there was no person better suited than Caleb to take this land.

Caleb Chooses the Most Difficult Task

And that precise piece of land was the most difficult to conquer. That was where the giants lived. That’s what they remembered. And that was the piece he wanted to have.

Joshua 14

¹² Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day; for [or, *because*] you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said.

So, he said:

“Give me this mountain because the Anakim were there, and the cities were great and fortified.”

Where else have we heard that in these days? Have you ever heard a statement like that?

“Lord, I want to have that because that is the most difficult.”

This is seldom heard. Where have you heard that before? Zinzendorf is an example, although that is history. His missionaries went to the most difficult places. What about today? Where have we heard this today?

¹⁵ And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim). Then the land had rest from war.

Joshua 15

¹³ Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a share among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, namely, Kirjath Arba, which is Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak).

¹⁴ Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there...

He did not just say, “I want it.” He actually took it. He really went at it and conquered it. That was what he really wanted.

Not Presumption

What is the difference between this request of Caleb’s and presumption?

Isaiah 6

⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then I said, Here am I! Send me.

That was no comfortable land into which Isaiah wanted to be sent. He was rather unwilling to fulfill this commission at first because the people were not very receptive to the message of God at all. When we read further we can see how difficult it would be.

⁹ And He said, Go, and tell this people: Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.

Isaiah didn’t say then,

“Well, never mind. I didn’t know that. You can send someone else. There’s no sense in it.”

But no, he was in.

“Here am I! Lord, send me.”

Jonah, on the other hand said,

“Send whom You want. Send someone else.”

Even Moses said,

“Send whom You want. Send someone else.”

But not Isaiah. Not Caleb.

“The most difficult piece of land? That’s what I want! I look forward to it—to the experience that I will have, because I know that this land that God has promised has been given to me and I will come closer to Him through it.”

What is the difference between this and presumption? Presumption also says,

“I can do this. Everything that the Lord says we will do.”

However, it does not rely on God, but instead on its own strength. As Caleb requested Hebron, the most difficult land where the giant children of Anak were, he relied on the promise which God had given in *Deuteronomy* 1:32:

“Caleb, who walked on this land, will receive it.”

This word was the foundation for his request to have it. Caleb was a man who relied on God and had confidence in everything—really everything. Joshua was similar. They were an example for the people.

Caleb Wanted to Help His Brethren

Why did Caleb want that? Of course he knew that he himself would gain a closer experience with God. But there was yet a deeper reason why he absolutely wanted that land. That reason was that he wanted to be an example for his brethren.

He knew how difficult it would be for the others to take this step. He wanted to show the others. He was the oldest, 85 years of age, and wanted to do this. He wanted to show through this that God can work through the weakest, or the oldest. Usually the oldest are the weakest. God can work through them. If He can do something through them then He

can also do it through you. Caleb wanted to be a blessing to Israel. That is why he absolutely wanted this piece of land.

This selfless request is an example for us today. The work will not be ended unless we have the faith of Caleb. It will not be ended unless we go forward exactly as he did. We cannot excuse ourselves that we are the weakest; that we are too young, too old, too sick, or anything else. When we really go forward according to the promise of God—and I must emphasize according to His promise,—when He says,

“This land is yours,”

then we can also say,

“I want to have this land. No question about it.”

Faith and Gratitude

Caleb’s faith was connected with a deep sense of gratitude. Faith and gratitude belong together. Let’s put ourselves in Caleb’s place. He was the man who, as one of the twelve spies, told Israel,

“We will be able to conquer the land.”

Ten of the spies said,

“We will not be able to conquer the land.”

And all the people listened to the ten. They did not allow themselves to be influenced by Caleb and Joshua’s report, although that report had been given with enthusiasm and with confidence, and even the rest of the spies had to admit that it was the truth.

Ultimately the people decided in favor of the ten, and this was a very sad decision. It also affected Caleb personally. To Moses, God suggested that He would allow Israel to perish and make Moses into a great nation instead. But Caleb didn’t have any such choice.

He had to go with the people through the forty years of desert wandering, whether he wanted to or not. Forty years of life lost! Forty years of being plagued by a people who went up and down, up and down! He had to watch them die one after the other in the desert until finally there was none of that generation left. Caleb could have been in the Promised Land forty years earlier.

And even now he hadn't reached his goal, because the giants were still in the way! The sons of the Anakim did not want to vacate the land for Israel. They did not want to be converted to the true God. Instead, they wanted to defend their country at all costs, so they fortified themselves to prevent Joshua and the people from entering.

But Caleb did not give up. In his speech to Joshua, he might have said,

“Forty years ago we could have been where we are now.”

Yet we read nothing of the sort. The only thing Caleb said was,

“I am just as strong today as I was then.”

He looked back and said,

“I am so grateful to God for preserving me all these forty years.”

He did not say:

“They've robbed me of forty years of my life.”

Instead, he declared:

“God has preserved me for forty years.”

He looked at what God had done, and that was the decisive factor for him. Without a doubt, the faith and gratitude expressed here were an example for others. We looked at Isaiah already, but I would like to read a text from Psalms as well:

Psalm 18

²⁹ For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall.

³⁰ As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

The Psalmist is saying:

“With God I can do everything. Everything! There is nothing that is impossible with Him. If I have a word from Him, then I can do it!”

Really? Is that true? Or are you not so sure? If I asked you to spread out your arms and fly over to Giessen or down to Bavaria, would that be possible too? You’re not sure, are you? So let’s consider this: everything!

Walking on Water

I want to look now at an example from the New Testament where something like this actually happened. It wasn’t about flying, but rather something else:

Matthew 14

²⁸ And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.

Would you dare to say something like this? We normally are not able to walk on water. There was no sand bar below the surface. The boat was there, and it could not have floated if there were a sand bar. We don’t know how Jesus could walk on the water; Peter knew even less about it.

Humanly speaking, it was impossible, just as if we were to spread our arms out and fly. That’s not possible. If someone tried to climb a mountain and jump off without having a parachute, he would hit the ground hard—no question—unless God told him to.

This is what happened with Peter. He said,

“Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the wa-

ter.”

In other words, Peter did not say

“Now I’m coming to You on the water because I have faith. I’m coming.”

Rather, he said,

“Command me to come.”

He waited for a command from Christ. This shows the faith of Peter, in contrast to presumption. That must be very clear. Presumption says,

“Oh Lord, You can walk on the water. I can do that too, because I have faith. Let me try.”

But no, Peter said,

“Command me. If You say so, according to Your word I will dare to do everything.”

That was precisely Caleb’s attitude as well:

“Command me.”

And God had commanded him, saying,

“You will conquer the land in which you have been, where the children of the giant, Anakim, are.”

That’s what Caleb did, just as Peter did.

“By my God I can leap over a wall.”

Couldn’t Peter have thought of something easier? He could have said,

“Lord, if it’s You, then come to us in the boat.”

Or,

“Lord, if it’s You, then speak a certain word.”

It could have been anything. But no, he said,

“If it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

He could have also said,

“If it’s You, then let bread appear in our boat.”

That also would have been very difficult, but it would not have meant that Peter had to do anything. Let’s put ourselves in Peter’s shoes. He said,

“Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water,”

That means he was prepared to step into the water—to step out of the boat and put his weight on the water. Consider this practically. It is easy to ask something of God which does not require an active step from me. But if it requires my action, then that’s different. And that’s what Peter did. Then Christ said,

“Come.”

Someone who just asked this as a test of courage would probably secretly hope for Christ to say,

“No, you don’t need to. It’s not necessary. You are willing to come, and that’s enough.”

But Jesus said, “Come.”

Matthew 14

²⁹ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

That was faith!

Matthew 14

³⁰ But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me!

Despite all the faith that Peter had, his was still a faith which needed to be perfected. He had not yet seen his own

weakness. He recognized this after he denied Christ.

The Privilege of Service

But, interestingly, this story shows us that God's servants do not shy away from any trial when they have faith. Rather, they are ready to accept anything which God may give them.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 502:

In the life of Christ, everything was made subordinate to His work, the great work of redemption which He came to accomplish.

We studied recently that when "your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light." (see *Matthew* 6:22). What Jesus means by this is:

"Concentrate on the important things in life. Make those your priority. Don't let yourselves be distracted. Don't let your thoughts wander off in different directions. Instead, be very concentrated on your task."

That is how it was in Christ's life.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 502:

Everything was made subordinate to His work, the great work of redemption which He came to accomplish. And the same devotion, the same self-denial and sacrifice, the same subjection to the claims of the word of God, is to be manifest in His disciples.

Everyone who accepts Christ as his personal Saviour will long for the privilege of serving God.

That was Caleb's attitude!

Contemplating what heaven has done for him, his heart is moved with boundless love and adoring gratitude. He is eager to signalize his gratitude by devoting his abilities to God's service.

Here again, we see faith and gratitude connected. Caleb was thankful that God had protected him those forty years and that he was still as strong as back then. This gratitude led

him, more than ever before, to consecrate himself fully to the service of the people and to be an example for them.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 502:

He longs to show his love for Christ and for His purchased possession. He covets toil, hardship, sacrifice.

He covets toil, hardship, and sacrifice. Where do we find that? We find it when true faith and thankfulness are coupled together. He covets toil, hardship, and sacrifice. Such a faith, of course, leads to certain actions. These actions then lead to a maturity of character which would not be otherwise possible.

Other Examples of Faith

Joseph

Joseph also showed a faith like Caleb's. We can look briefly at his story in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, after he was sold as a slave. As we know, Joseph was prone to self-pity. It was a struggle for him, but once he decided not to fall into it, his real strengths were awakened.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 214:

His soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven. He would serve the Lord with undivided heart; he would meet the trials of his lot with fortitude and perform every duty with fidelity. One day's experience had been the turning point in Joseph's life.

“Turning point” doesn't just mean that he simply accepted his lot. Rather, he accepted it as a good lot! His soul thrilled with the opportunity to do something for the Lord.

Its terrible calamity had transformed him from a petted child to a man, thoughtful, courageous, and self-possessed.

That means his character was matured by the fact that he accepted his lot as something good instead of something bad. His lot was to be separated from his father, his brethren, his home, and everything that he knew. And that was exactly what he strove for: toil, hardship, and sacrifice.

Moses

Another example in this connection is that of Moses.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 255:

The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to

Israel. But having once accepted the work,...

Moses was really concentrated. When your eye is good, your whole body is light. He was concentrated on this one thing.

...he entered upon it with his whole heart [not half-heartedly], putting all his trust in the Lord. The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind.

God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust Him fully and give themselves unreservedly to His commands.

We see here again how this faith, which Moses now applied, had an influence on his character.

“He became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted.”

That means that his highest intellectual powers were developed.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 255:

A man will gain power and efficiency as he accepts the responsibilities that God places upon him, and with his whole soul seeks to qualify himself to bear them aright. However humble his position or limited his ability, that man will attain true greatness who, trusting to divine strength, seeks to perform his work with fidelity.

Had Moses relied upon his own strength and wisdom, and eagerly accepted the great charge, he would have evinced his entire unfitness for such a work. The fact that a man feels his weakness is at least some evidence that he realizes the magnitude of the work appointed him, and that he will make God his counselor and his strength.

That is one side. The other side is that those who really have faith will say,

“By my God I can leap over a wall.”

But as we see here, this is not presumption.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 363:

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure.

This is why Caleb wanted to conquer the city.

We should not talk of our own weakness and inability.

Sure, we should recognize that we have weaknesses, but when we speak of them they come into focus. And that is not good.

This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do.

That is the opposite of what Caleb did. Caleb didn't speak of his old age, looking forward to relaxing in a retirement home. He could have expressed this, but he didn't do so at all.

John Knox

Let's read another example of a man with Caleb's faith:

Evangelism, p. 294:

If we have the interest that John Knox had when he pleaded before God for Scotland, we shall have success. He cried, "Give me Scotland, Lord, or I die."

That is Caleb. Exactly that.

And when we take hold of the work and wrestle with God, saying, "I must have souls; I will never give up the struggle," we shall find that God will look upon our efforts with favor.

That is our work. "Give me Scotland, or I die." That is the attitude Caleb had. Here we see it in the reformer, John Knox.

And we live in such a time today. God wants Calebs, through whom the land will be conquered. There are, of course, still enemies. As we saw earlier, these are sin and sickness—wherever they are to be found. They are both in us, and they are the enemies against which we are fighting.

The Sons of Joseph

We also want to look at the example of the sons of Joseph.

Joshua 16

¹ The lot fell to the children of Joseph from the Jordan, by Jericho, to the waters of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goes up from Jericho through the mountains to Bethel,

² Then went out from Bethel to Luz, passed along to the border of the Archites at Ataroth,

³ And went down westward to the boundary of the Japhletites, as far as the boundary of Lower Beth Horon to Gezer; and it ended at the sea.

⁴ So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

Joshua 17

¹⁴ Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people, inasmuch as the Lord has blessed us until now?

The lot was divided by 11, as Levi didn't have one. Ephraim and Manasseh received only one between them and were not happy with that. Here was someone who said,

“I received a bad lot—only one lot.”

¹⁵ So Joshua answered them, If you are a great people, then go up to the forest country and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you.

In other words:

“Go and get more. There is enough land.”

Joshua 17

¹⁶ But the children of Joseph said, The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both those who are of Beth Shean and its towns and those who are of the Valley of Jezreel.

Here again we see the “army tanks,” which were so powerful that there seemed to be no chance against them. That was actually the reason why Ephraim and Manasseh resisted, why they thought they had a bad lot. It was exactly the opposite of Caleb’s attitude. Caleb wanted to go where the giants were.

But they saw the soldiers still there and didn’t want to go. They didn’t want to fight. They didn’t want to put forth effort. They didn’t covet toil, hardship, and sacrifice. Instead, they sought for the easy way. That is why they thought of their lot as a bad one.

Let’s again ask ourselves the question:

“What do we think about our lot? Are we content with our lot or not? And why are we content or not?”

When it means toil, hardship, and sacrifice, then we are often not content because we don’t have Caleb’s attitude. God wants to change that. He wants to give us the attitude of Caleb.

So, Joseph’s sons said that the land didn’t have enough space for them.

Joshua 17

¹⁷ And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—saying, You are a great people and have great power; you shall not have only one lot,

¹⁸ But the mountain country shall be yours. Although it is wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong.

Joshua used the same argument. Ephraim and Manasseh

said that they were a great people. Joshua answered,

“Yes, you are many. And for that very reason you are strong, right? So, take that land. You will have more than one lot. You will have that land as well.”

They could say nothing more to that. We see, generally, in the history of Israel that many of the tribes did not achieve what they could have. They were content to settle in the land where they were and they definitely avoided toil, hardship, and sacrifice under all circumstances. And for that reason, the earthly Canaan was never that which God purposed for it to be—a foretaste of heaven.

The book of *Isaiah* describes many things that Israel could have been. For example, they could have been the land where milk and honey really flowed, where the people lived for a long time, where everything prospered. That would have been a very good foretaste of heaven.

But it turned out differently, and the reason was simply because they had no faith. Jesus said repeatedly,

“According to your faith be it unto you.”

Caleb had the faith that the land would become theirs. And exactly according to his faith it happened.

The Cities of Refuge

The story continues in *Joshua* 20, with lessons for us at every turn. This chapter speaks of the cities of refuge. Back then there was a law of revenge, which allowed a wrongdoer to be punished, along with their family. For example, if my father committed an injustice, the victim’s family could avenge the injustice on me.

That was the law in those days, and even though it was not in harmony with God’s righteousness, He did not directly change it. Why not? In the Old Testament God first gave the people simpler lessons, which then prepared them for greater

lessons later on. We have seen this in the old covenant. That was a simple exercise which was to help them understand a deeper spiritual lesson. That is how God educates His people.

God did not directly change this law of revenge. But He created a providential solution which practically canceled the law of revenge, and in such a way that a lesson was given as well. Only infinite wisdom could develop such a solution.

This was the formation of cities of refuge. There were certain cities of the Levites which were designated as cities of refuge. Those upon whom revenge was to be taken could flee to these cities. The way to these cities needed to be well marked and in excellent condition, so that everyone could find them directly and quickly. These were the requirements. It was important. In this way, God provided protection from revenge.

The refugees had protection only within these cities. Revenge could not be taken as long as they stayed within the city limits. After a few years, a person could decide to leave. But as soon as they left, the protection was gone. They could be killed. Thus the refugees were really dependent upon staying inside those cities.

What lesson did God want to give through this? He wanted to show that through the grace of Christ we have protection from the destroyer. We deserve death. And we have protection from the devil only when we flee to Jesus.

But it's not enough just to come to Jesus; we must also abide in Him. If we don't remain in the city, we are exposed to death. Jesus wanted to give all of these lessons to the people back then, and also to us today. That is how God dealt with the situation.

God also dealt similarly with slavery in the New Testament. There were slaves, and although God is opposed to slavery, He did not directly break it down. He didn't tell His peo-

ple: fight against slavery. Instead, He simply gave a message through Paul which said that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

And God's view of slavery was revealed without question in the story of Onesimus, who ran away from his master to Paul. Again, in infinite wisdom God gave a lesson which is much deeper than if He had simply said, "Put this away!" He knew that the people were not ready for that yet. Other lessons needed to be given first.

This is also important for us today. We are in a world which has turned God's laws upside down. There are things considered normal in the world which are absolutely abnormal to God, and which were not normal for people in former times either. Let's remember what the reformers achieved. Yet today, sin is completely normal.

The question is, how do we deal with sin as God's people? We can see God's infinite wisdom in His response. He met the sin, but in such a way that the people could understand and bear it. He met it in such a way as to really reveal the sin and cancel its power—not by just plainly going against it. We still need much of God's wisdom in this. The cities of refuge contain many important lessons for us.

Dealing with Misunderstandings

The last chapters in Joshua speak of the two-and-a-half tribes who built an altar. The other Israelites thought they wanted to make a new center of worship, separate from their own. They became jealous and wanted to attack them. When the two-and-a-half tribes on the other side of the Jordan found out about the plan of attack, they responded that it was not their purpose to make a separate center of worship.

They spoke calmly with the larger group and showed them that the altar was only to be in remembrance of the main center, and not an independent place. It was actually to connect

them and their children to the center in Jerusalem. This explanation prevented the war.

The way in which the two-and-a-half tribes dealt with the issue—calmly and reasonably—shows us how we should also deal with difficulties and misunderstandings which can come up among the people of God. It's also a very important lesson.

1 Peter 3

⁸ Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous:

We must be strict against sin. But we must not act only on assumptions. That is what is shown here.

⁹ Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

Joshua's Final Warning

Joshua's final words are recorded in *Joshua* 24. He told the people that they were not able to serve God, but they replied that they wanted to. It is not reported how this situation ended. But in Joshua's time, at least, the people of Israel remained faithful to God. That gives us an indication that they meant this statement honestly.

Joshua 24

¹⁹ But Joshua said to the people, You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

²⁰ If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.

²¹ And the people said to Joshua, No, but we will serve the Lord!

²² So Joshua said to the people, You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves, to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses!

Today we also make many covenants with God, and we renew them regularly. Promises are made through baptism. And it is a very serious issue when these promises are not kept. As solemnly as these promises to serve the Lord are made, Joshua says,

“You are witnesses against yourselves.”

Those who have made these promises and who now no longer fulfill them are witnesses against themselves. The Israelites agreed to this back then.

Joshua 24

²³ Now therefore, he said, put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.

²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!

It is my desire that we too will be just as courageous to go forward, and that we will abide in Jesus. Then, when circumstances come in ways we may not expect, we will keep the spirit of Caleb, Isaiah, and John Knox, and say:

“Here I am; send me.”

That is our lot now for these last days. And that is how God will end His work.

Keeping the Mind on Christ

Let's read about the time when the disciples were in the storm on the lake and Jesus came walking on the water. When they saw Him, the disciples thought it was a phantom. Then they recognized Him, and their fear turned to joy.

The Desire of Ages, p. 381:

As soon as they could credit the wondrous fact, Peter was almost beside himself with joy. As if he could scarcely yet believe, he cried out, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come."

Peter's Act of Faith

This request was an act of faith on Peter's part—similar to Caleb, who asked for a particular piece of the land. When Peter made this request of Christ, he had no thought of making a show, even if it seems that way at first. His request was not premeditated. He just simply wanted to be with Christ. That was his only motive at that moment. So he asked Christ, and Christ said, "Come."

The Desire of Ages, p. 381:

Looking unto Jesus, Peter walks securely; but as in self-satisfaction he glances back toward his companions in the boat, his eyes are turned from the Saviour.

Losing the Focus

His original motive was to be with Christ; but once on the water, he started thinking other thoughts. He wasn't concentrating on the matter at hand so much anymore.

As we studied the subject of faith, I thought that we must also study the subject of prayer. One problem we have when we pray is that we don't actually talk to God. Our thoughts are constantly distracted with other matters, which we can't

allow to happen because when our thoughts turn from Christ, we will experience what Peter did. In Peter's case, his thoughts turned to his companions in the boat and the recognition he would receive from them.

This happens when God gives success. After the initial excitement is passed, we look back and think, "Wasn't that something!" That is a distraction, and we need to see it as just that.

The Desire of Ages, p. 381:

The wind is boisterous. The waves roll high, and come directly between him and the Master; and he is afraid. For a moment Christ is hidden from his view, and his faith gives way. He begins to sink. But while the billows talk with death, Peter lifts his eyes from the angry waters, and fixing them upon Jesus, cries, "Lord, save me." Immediately Jesus grasps the outstretched hand, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Peter started off with such great faith and was able to walk on the water. Yet right after that, Jesus told him that he had such little faith. What happened?

He became distracted. He stopped concentrating on the matter at hand. He did not keep his eyes fixed on Christ. This is a problem which we have too and which Jesus wants to remove. Turning from Christ means nothing less than turning to our own ability and strength.

Walking side by side, Peter's hand in that of his Master, they stepped into the boat together. But Peter was now subdued and silent.

This was actually the best thing that could have happened to Peter—even if it was embarrassing for him.

The Desire of Ages, p. 381-382:

He had no reason to boast over his fellows, for through unbelief and self-exaltation he had very nearly lost his life. When he turned his eyes from Jesus, his footing was lost, and he sank amid the waves.

When trouble comes upon us, how often we are like Peter! We look upon the waves, instead of keeping our eyes fixed upon the Saviour. Our footsteps slide, and the proud waters go over our souls. Jesus did not bid Peter come to Him that he should perish; He does not call us to follow Him, and then forsake us.

“Fear not,” He says; “for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.” Isa. 43:1-3.

One reason Caleb was so successful is simply because He kept his mind fixed upon Christ and wouldn't be distracted. Peter was just like that when he first stepped out of the boat.

The Desire of Ages, p. 382:

Jesus read the character of His disciples. He knew how sorely their faith was to be tried. In this incident on the sea He desired to reveal to Peter his own weakness,—to show that his safety was in constant [constant!] dependence upon divine power. Amid the storms of temptation he could walk safely only as in utter self-distrust he should rely upon the Saviour. It was on the point where he thought himself strong that Peter was weak; and not until he discerned his weakness could he realize his need of dependence upon Christ. Had he learned the lesson that Jesus sought to teach him in that experience on the sea, he would not have failed when the great test came upon him.

Day by day God instructs His children. By the circumstances of the daily life He is preparing them to act their part upon that wider stage to which His providence has appointed them. It is the issue of the daily test that determines their victory or defeat in life's great crisis.

In other words, do we really understand the lot God has given us and accept it with our whole heart?

Those who fail to realize their constant dependence upon God will be overcome by temptation. We may now suppose

that our feet stand secure, and that we shall never be moved. We may say with confidence, "I know in whom I have believed; nothing can shake my faith in God and in His word." But Satan is planning to take advantage of our hereditary and cultivated traits of character, and to blind our eyes to our own necessities and defects. Only through realizing our own weakness and looking steadfastly [constantly and without being distracted] unto Jesus can we walk securely.

This is the teaching we get from Peter's experience on the lake. It fits so well with what we have been studying.

The Footwashing = Declaring My Need

Now let's read about the Lord's Supper and the foot washing, which was a preparation for it:

John 13

¹ Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

² And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him;

³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,

⁴ Rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.

⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

⁶ Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, Lord, are You washing my feet?

When Peter didn't want Christ to wash his feet, he was saying that he didn't need Jesus to help him back into the boat; that he could walk on the water himself. But he didn't think that way when he was sinking. On the contrary, he held Jesus' hand quite firmly. Yet somehow he had forgotten all of that since then, or didn't see the application at this time.

⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.

Is it humiliating to us when we allow our feet to be washed? It might be for some, to be in need and to have others fill that need.

I would like to remind everyone that sometimes the only way to reach the world is when we have a need and say so. This was the only way Jesus could reach the Samaritan woman. He told her He was thirsty and asked for a drink of water, and in this way He won her to the truth.

We must not do this as a tactic to manipulate someone. If we don't feel our need, we must not pretend, just to make it seem as though we have a need. Such a practice will be discovered sooner or later.

But we should express our genuine needs, and Peter needed to do that as well. He needed to have his feet washed.

John 13

⁸ Peter said to Him, You shall never wash my feet!

I have asked myself how often we say that to others when we decide never to be dependent upon anyone else.

⁸ ...Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.

What is so bad about letting someone wash your feet? Why is it so hard? For one thing, we thereby show our weakness. Perhaps then we worry that others will take advantage of us, and we will become dependent upon them and lose control of our lives. Isn't that the reason in the end? Losing control?

But that is the very thing we need to learn—to give up control and turn everything over to Jesus.

⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!

The deciding factor for Peter was having no part with Christ. Though Peter didn't want his feet washed, one thing was sure—he didn't want to be separated from Christ. Being with Christ was the priority in his life, and that is why he gave up control. That says something about Peter. He became one of the most faithful disciples, and also one of the most successful.

John 13

⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.

By saying this, Jesus was not watering down the conditions of unity with Him or yielding to Peter. He was actually confirming what He had already said. He was saying,

“Come, just as I have said, and not as you want to.”

Peter made another decision, that more of him should be washed. But Jesus said,

“No. Just as I have said. Turn the control over to Me. Don't take it back by making other suggestions. Just let go. Let everything go—into My hands.”

And Peter was willing to do that. Jesus also had to say that not everyone was clean, and even though that was terrible news for them all, they had to accept it.

John 13

¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, You are not all clean.

Later they would understand why Jesus said this. It was necessary for them to understand that Jesus knew from the beginning who would betray Him, that He knew from the beginning what Judas' intentions were.

This would generate in them faith—faith in Christ, who

was not surprised by the betrayal. Jesus was not surprised when He was taken captive, and the disciples came to realize this later.

John 13

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, Do you know what I have done to you?

¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.

¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Keeping the Faith

I would like to emphasize again that the Lord's Supper, and particularly the foot washing, is often a very emotional time for us. This is because we think of how Jesus has washed our feet and how He humbled Himself and came down to us in our low condition. All of this is quite moving to us, and we want to be like Christ and serve our brethren.

But I want to warn you that even the best and most pleasant feelings are worthless if they don't last. We create a difficulty when we try to deal quickly with some issue just before the Lord's Supper and then forget all about it shortly thereafter. It's a shame when that happens. That's why Paul warns us to examine ourselves.

It is good to make things right while we still have probationary time, and I trust that each one of us has examined our heart, but I still must expressly bring up this point. The Lord's Supper is a time in which the Holy Spirit is particularly at work. Let us keep our hearts open to Him so that the love, hu-

mility, and submission that He is teaching us stays with us.

It's like fleeing into one of the cities of refuge and staying there because we can't afford to go out again. If we do leave the city, we know that there is an avenger out there who wants to get us, and that is Satan, who is determined to bring us down.

Let us move forward step by step from our experience today, always keeping in mind what Jesus said:

John 13

¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.