

Bible Reading Notes

January 2011

Tuesday, January 25th – Galatians 6: 6-8

The issue of reciprocal service and support that Paul raised in v.6 is placed in vv.7-10 within the context of spiritual investment. The selfish receiving of faithful ministry without reciprocating a sharing of good things with the one who ministers is wrong and self-defeating because what men receive in a ministry of the Word is seed, as Paul alludes to here and Jesus speaks of in His Parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:3 ff). The Word ministered is a sowing of small potential that is intended to produce something greater in and through those who receive it. The sharing of practical necessities with the ones who ministers the Word is likewise a sowing that provides potential for a minister to devote himself to his calling without the distraction of worldly avocations. The more a minister sows the Word, the greater the potential is for his flock to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ; the more a flock sows seeds of practical support for its minister to explore the treasury of God's Word, the more that minister, with loving gratitude to God and to His people, will share generously his edifying discoveries from the Word.

Wednesday, January 26th – Galatians 6: 7, 8

The universal principle of cause and effect is stated in v.7. What a man sows is the cause; what he reaps is the consequence. But there is time between one's sowing and his reaping, often a great deal of time. Men can and do deceive themselves into thinking that a sacrificial sowing of loving concern and care for others is a vain waste of one's energies, while the sowing of self-regarding indulgences containing their own reward of immediate gratification is reasonable. But such thinking ignores and despises the Lord and His blessed directives and promises. Read Ps. 73 in this connection. Because of the sovereign being and blessed promises and warnings of God, what a person sows that person will always reap. If he sows blessing in the lives of others, he will reap blessing for others and for himself; if he sows cursing, he will reap cursing (Mt. 25: 31-46).

Thursday, January 27th – Galatians 6: 7, 8

From the general principle stated in v.7, Paul moves to the specific application in v.8. In 2 Cor. 9:6, the apostle wrote in terms of quantity: *he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly*. Here in Gal. 6:8, he writes in terms of quality. It is not only how much or little we do for the Lord that matters to Him and to us, it is also of critical importance how we sow or invest our time, energies, opportunities, and possessions. If we sow to our flesh, meaning that if we do things for personal and immediate gratification without regard to God, His will, His grace, His glory, or His people, then we shall reap a character that is ignorant of vital realities and void of spiritual and practical capabilities and satisfying sensitivities. If we lose our lives by giving them in loving devotion to God and loving service to others, we shall find ourselves changing into God's likeness and apprehending and using with compassion and competence the precious and potent graces and gifts of His Holy Spirit in a life that brings blessing to others and rich rewards to us from our God in time and in eternity.

Friday, January 28th – Galatians 6: 8

Fleshly indulgence does not strengthen our flesh, but leads to weakness, corruption, and

death. Those who lose their lives by the gracious enabling of God's indwelling Holy Spirit and for the sake of Christ and His people, will save and strengthen them in the everlasting precious riches and potent capacities of the Lord (Mt. 8:35). There are only these two ways to live and to sow, with only these two consequences, each issuing from its respective cause.

Saturday, January 29th - Galatians 6: 9, 10

Paul draws his application in these verses from what he has written about spiritual and carnal investment in vv.7,8. Because our sowing to our own flesh can seem so reasonable and rewarding and so reinforced by the many examples of others doing such sowing all around us, we can feel as though our sowing to the Spirit is a wearying matter of our swimming against a great tide. While our doing good may bless others and glorify God, our own reward may seem a long time coming. To such considerations, Paul encourages us not to be deceived by current appearances (v.7), and not to allow ourselves to be discouraged in the course of our doing good for others. We avoid such deception and discouragement by our knowing that our God has given us in Christ His greatest treasure to fulfill our greatest need and truest desire, and that in Him we possess and will be led to unpack every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3).

Sunday, January 30th - Galatians 6: 9, 10

When Paul writes, *let us not lose heart in doing good*, he humbly and candidly acknowledges that he along with his readers felt the pressure and temptation to grow weary in doing good. The fact that the great apostle acknowledges his own vulnerability to this temptation serves as a sympathetic encouragement to his readers that lightens the burden of their temptation in a way that imperious words of command could never do. Paul here speaks the heartening language of his Master, who by the temptations He suffered became our sympathetic and helping high priest (Heb. 2:18).

Monday January 31st - Galatians 6: 9, 10

We do not grow weary in our doing good when we keep our eyes fixed on the love of God in Christ. Our God will not be mocked as One who has promised glorious rewards to His servants that He cannot or will not provide to them. Our God has already given to us Christ and all blessing in Him. We therefore in our doing good works walk in the very works our God has prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Eph. 2:10), and we do so by His inexhaustible grace, love, and enabling power. We serve a God who is the Judge of all the earth who will do right by His servants, and who also is the God of all grace who ever does exceeding abundantly beyond what we ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

Tuesday, February 1st - Galatians 6: 9, 10

Part of the heartening we receive as we do good by our God's grace and for His glory is our sure knowledge that we shall reap *in due time*. Our God is not ignorant or forgetful of our labors for Him and His people; nor will He fail to reward us abundantly. Yet, His reward comes not according to our reckoning of when it is due but in His perfect timing, which is always good, right, loving, wise, and perfect as we can reckon now by faith but shall see and joyfully acknowledge when our Lord's reaping time and inconceivably great reward shall come.

Wednesday, February 2nd - Galatians 6: 9, 10

What we shall reap when the time comes will bear no reasonable resemblance to the magnitude

of our service. The Lord's blessing of our labors will be vastly greater in quantity and quality than what we have sown. Jesus teaches us this when He tells us of men doing good with five and ten of their master's minas being rewarded with five and ten cities respectively (Lk. 19:11-19). Our Lord also tells us of His servants being rewarded for their feeding and giving drink to His hungry and thirsty brothers. They who gave such earthly fare to their fellow men are granted as their reward from God an inheritance in His glorious and eternal kingdom (Mt. 25:34-40). Finally, we can encourage ourselves by our reflecting upon the wonders of this world that God created in six days, and has since cursed because of our sin, and then comparing those wonders to the inconceivable glory that awaits us in our Father's heaven, where Jesus has been preparing a place for us since the day of His ascension (Jn. 14:1-3).

Thursday, February 3rd - Galatians 6: 9, 10

Paul concludes his encouraging application of his teaching on spiritual investment by telling his readers to recognize and grasp every God-given opportunity for them to do good. The opportunities will be more than we might imagine, for our doing of good is to serve not only to edify our brethren, whose faith makes them appreciative of and gratefully amenable to our good service for them, but also we are to do good to all people, many of whom may hold us and our service for them in contempt. Some of those unbelieving ones who do despise our service will surely find that the good we have done them is seed that will spring up into a fruition that transforms them from being our neighbors to being our brethren in Christ (Mt. 5:16).

Friday, February 4th - Galatians 6: 9, 10

While our calling and equipping is to do good to all men, we are especially called and equipped by our God to do good to His children, our brethren in Christ. This is so because our God has done the supreme good in giving His Son to save and richly to bless rebel sinners who by His saving grace are transformed into His beloved children. By His infinitely sacrificial doing of this good, our God lost nothing, but gained for Himself an innumerable people whom He fills with the loving mind of His Son, whereby they reward each other here and now with honoring service that is a token of the eternal reward of their reigning with Christ forever in glory (Phil. 2:3-13).

Thursday, February 5th - Galatians 6: 11

With this verse, Paul begins his conclusion of this great epistle. The theme of this letter has been the apostolic declaration of the necessity and sufficiency of the genuine gospel of God's saving grace as opposed to the counterfeit gospels of man's legalism and license. To all of Paul's powerful arguments and touching personal appeals contained in this letter he adds one final personal touch in which he indicates to the Galatians that he wrote this letter to them with his own hand. The reference to the apostle's large letters need not necessarily refer to his having an eye affliction as some draw out from Gal. 4:15. We learn from 2 Thess. 3:17 that Paul personally added a closing greeting to his letters and that he customarily wrote in a distinctive hand. The point is not Paul's penmanship but rather that to the Galatians he apparently wrote out himself the entire letter rather than dictating the body of it to a secretary. Such personal commitment in the writing of this letter emphasizes Paul's personal commitment to Christ and to His blessed gospel and to His people in sharp contrast to the posturing of the teachers of a false gospel. The hand, the mind and the heart of this apostle all point the readers of this letter to the Lord of grace and glory, whose hands have been pierced for our transgressions because He loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

Sunday, February 6th - Galatians 6: 12, 13

In contrast to Paul's sincere love for the people of God and his sincere commitment to ground them in the true saving love of God in Christ, the apostle once more exposes the hypocritical motives of the false teachers who had been plaguing the Galatian believers. Whether they were Judaisers, or their followers, or their sympathizers, they were all heading and misdirecting others away from the cross of Christ through which the Son of God bore the entire penalty for the sins of His people and provided for them His perfect righteousness. Such false teachers wanted to *appear* religious, conscientious, and obedient to God rather than to *be* so before Him as trophies of His saving grace. They were sanctimonious head-hunters, who sought to bolster their own sagging confidence due to their barely hidden shame by their compelling the Galatians to submit to a law they themselves could not and did not keep. There was nothing true, right, good, holy, or loving about their motives and nothing edifying in their false doctrine. Such false teachers have not ceased to plague the Church in our day, and therefore we must not cease to be on guard against them.

Monday, February 7th - Galatians 6: 14

After his exposure of the unholy and unloving motives of the false teachers, the apostle declares with true and conscientious sincerity his own motives. First, he declares the Savior's cross to be the entire foundation and focus of his life. Then, he speaks of the results of this focus being a dual crucifixion wherein the lusts of the flesh, eyes, and world had been put to death in Paul's life, and by which new life Paul had become to the world as desirable as a corpse. The apostle writes at length in Phil. 3:1-11 about this radical death he died to the world of his Pharisaic respectability, and its consequent cause of his rejection and persecution by the Pharisees and other graceless men of the world. Nothing purges and purifies a man's motives as does his union by faith to Christ in His death and resurrection.

Tuesday, February 8th - Galatians 6: 14

Paul not only focused on Christ, he boasted in the Savior and in His redeeming death on the cross. Paul did not boast in his own natural endowments and attainments as he once had done (Phil 3:4-6). He did not glory in nor was he impressed by man's sinful flesh, however religious and respectable it might appear to be. Instead, he boasted with joyful exultation in the crucified Son of God who loved him enough to take on the likeness of human flesh, and give Himself to a life of humiliation and suffering and to the shame and tortures of His death on the cross, all to the end of His providing His perfect human righteousness for all who by faith call upon Him for salvation. This holy boasting towers above the petty conceits of men who feebly try to appear good.

Wednesday, February 9th - Galatians 6: 14

Paul's boast was not in anything except the essence of the true gospel of salvation. The precise way he puts it is that his only boast is *in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. That phrase says everything that is of worth and significance in the world. The cross speaks of man's sin and absolute need of salvation because what Jesus endured on the cross is what every sinner deserves. The cross speaks of God's absolute justice because we behold the Father putting to death His own Son because He who knew no sin was made to be sin for His people. The cross reveals the saving grace, wisdom, power, and love of God because God gave His Son as the only worthy substitute to atone for the sins of His people by His voluntarily submitting to the death

and divine dereliction that they deserved. The cross speaks of the work of God in Christ that is more precious and potent than anything any man or group of men in cooperative ventures ever has done or could do. The cross is the supreme work of God that is more glorious than the spectacular wonders of the original creation.

Thursday, February 10th - Galatians 6: 14

Paul boasted in the cross of Christ because it was and is the actual provision of God for the salvation of sinners. It is not like circumcision, which was a pledge and token of the promise of salvation. Circumcision was a religious rite pointing away from itself to a salvation to come; the cross is the perfect redemption of sinners accomplished by the Son of God. Paul boasted and teaches us to boast in and gratefully to depend upon the very heart and substance of salvation, not in its shadows.

Friday, February 11th - Galatians 6: 14

The Romans executed many criminals on many crosses in the ancient world. Many if not most of those executions served to protect and preserve society from its worst elements. But none of those crosses served to reconcile sinners to God and to transform sinners into the blessed likeness of God. That is why Paul boasted only in the cross of Jesus Christ, the unique God/man, who being very God of very God accomplished a saving work of infinite worth, and who being truly man paid the penalty as man for man and provided a perfect human righteousness for all who ask for it from God by faith. There is no greater person in whom saved sinners can boast, nor is there any work done in all the world in all the ages of the world's history greater than what this Savior has done.

Saturday, February 12th - Galatians 6: 14

Paul boasts in the cross of *our* Lord Jesus Christ. The work of Christ reconciles sinners to God and to one another. Therefore, when Paul uses the plural possessive pronoun, *our*, rather than the singular, *my*, he is indicating further reason for his boasting. The cross of Christ reconciled a man who had been a proud Pharisee and persecutor of the people who looked to Jesus Christ for their salvation into a humble and grateful follower of Christ and lover of those whom he with joy and thanksgiving regarded as his brethren in the Lord.

Sunday, February 13th - Galatians 6: 14, 15

The results of Paul's committed and celebratory trust in the person and work of Christ are sketched in these verses. Negatively, a dual crucifixion resulted in Paul's life as a consequence of his saving faith in Christ. Positively, a new life resulted. In every way and to radical and lasting degree it is true that if any man is in Christ, he is and abides in a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Monday, February 14th - Galatians 6: 14

The negative result of Paul's jubilant stand on the work and in the person of Christ was a double crucifixion in the apostle's life. The world had been crucified to Paul. In light of the glory of Christ's cross the tawdry trinkets of the world were seen by Paul in their true grimy colors. The best the world without Christ has to offer is rubbish in view of the saving riches of God in Christ (Phil. 3:7-14). At the same time, by his conversion to Christ, Paul was considered by the worldly men among whom he had been accepted as a respectable Pharisee as being among the dregs of

the world. As the angel of the Lord blessed Jacob by dislocating his hip and as Joseph blessed his family by his requesting for them the isolated land of Goshen in Egypt and by his telling the Egyptians that his family members were shepherds (an occupation the Egyptians despised), so the Lord puts the mark of Christ's cross on all believers so that by their being despised by the world they will be preserved from the world's corruption. Part of the rest to which Jesus calls us consists in our bearing this preserving cross (Mt. 11:28-30).

Tuesday, February 15th - Galatians 6: 15

The positive result of Paul's embracing the cross of Christ was his having been made by God a new creature and a member of the Lord's new creation of the kingdom of the redeemed. If our crucifixion makes the world mock us, the new life we have in Christ makes the world envy and even dread us. Our being new creatures makes the world hate us as it hated our Lord (Ps. 2:2; Jn. 15:18).

Wednesday, February 16th - Galatians 6: 16

Once again Paul speaks in corporate terms when he speaks of *those* who live by faith in Christ. Paul's transforming experience in Christ was not unique. It had been replicated in many lives in Paul's day and prior to Paul's day. It has been replicated in a multitude ever since. Paul's boast in the cross of Christ is our boast, and if anything else becomes our boast we are being untrue to Christ, to our brethren, and to ourselves. Let us rejoice increasingly in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ by which we have been made new creatures in Him.

Thursday, February 17th - Galatians 6: 16

Those to whom Paul refers in this verse are ones who walked by the blessed rule of Christ who had loved them and been crucified for them and who is now resurrected from the dead and ascended to heaven ever to reign over them through His ceaseless intercessions. The fruit of peace with God issuing from the root of the saving mercy of God was upon them and would ever abide with and in them as individual believers and as members of the true, spiritual kingdom of royal children of God as is designated by Paul's use of the term *Israel of God*. The apostle's pronouncement of this peace and mercy is more than descriptive. It is an authoritative benediction that serves to confer peace and mercy upon those receiving and reading this letter, even to and beyond us in our day.

Friday, February 18th - Galatians 6: 17

The words translated *from now on* in some versions of this verse literally should read: *for the rest* (meaning *as for the remainder*). In contrast to his brethren who reveled in the blessed peace and mercy of the Lord, Paul has a final word for the false teachers, the dregs that were sinking ever deeper into bondage and misery through their legalistic despising of the perfection of God's grace. Paul admonishes such false teachers to trouble him and his beloved brethren in Christ no longer, for he and they bore the blessed and indelible marks of their being beloved, precious possessions of Christ. False teaching and teachers may afflict the Church but they are involved in futile endeavor when they try to obscure or erase the marks of loving ownership seared by God's grace upon and into the minds, hearts, and hands of those who have tasted the good grace of God and have become new creatures by its power.

Saturday, February 19th - Galatians 6: 18

The first word, the last word, and the heart of this great epistle is grace. It is the grace of God expressed through the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ that is the supreme benediction that can be conferred upon a people. Our blessedness is in Christ and His saving grace, not in the regulations of man, not even in the Law of God and certainly not in our feeble donning of the filthy rags of self-righteousness. This blessing enlightens and transforms our minds, lovingly captivates our hearts, and enraptures our spirits. It makes us know God's love; it makes us love others, especially our brethren in Christ; it does so truly and lastingly, as the final word, *Amen*, emphatically declares.

The Book of Joshua

Sunday, February 20th – Joshua 1: 1, 2

As an introduction to the Book of Joshua we review the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These men showed their natural sinfulness, but the saving grace of God was also prevailingly manifested in their lives. From Jacob came the twelve tribes of Israel through his sons. They began their lives in the Promised Land but were preserved from famine by God's sinless use of the sins of Jacob's older sons against their younger brother, Joseph, whom they sold into slavery but whom God preserved and exalted in Egypt, making him a savior of his family. More than four centuries after their going into Egypt, the people of Israel who had been reduced to slavery, were led out of by the power of God ministered through Moses. God led them to Canaan quickly and directly, but at Kadesh-Barnea they balked in unbelief and refused to enter the land, regarding the inhabitants there to be greater than their God. Only Joshua and Caleb believed God and urged the people to enter the land in reliance upon the Lord. Due to their unbelief, the Lord consigned His people to forty years of wilderness dwelling, until all of that unbelieving generation, except the tiny faithful remnant of Joshua and Caleb, died off. It was after that period of disciplinary devastation that Joshua was called by God to lead the new generation of Israel into Canaan. Moses could not lead them in, for he, too, had died in the wilderness due to his sinful anger. The Book of Joshua, therefore, is about life issuing from death, victory issuing from defeats, and the Lord's people entering into His kingdom through many tribulations. It is about our lives, struggles, and triumphs in Christ.

Monday, February 21st - Joshua 1: 1, 2

The Book of Joshua recounts Israel's entrance into, conquest of, and settlement in Canaan. It is history fashioned by the God who wrought His holy and gracious will through His dealings with His people. This particular period of history portrays for us many facets of the Lord's redemptive salvation of His Church. It shows us the struggles and triumphs of the covenant people in their following their God-appointed leader, Joshua, whose name means *Savior* and whose work foreshadows the work of Jesus, the Savior of His people. We learn much about the substance of salvation by our study of these redemptive shadows.

Tuesday, February 22nd - Joshua 1: 1, 2

We are told in the opening verse of Joshua of the death of Moses. He who had been the great leader of Israel, who had called down from heaven the plagues on Egypt, who had led the suffering slaves of Israel out of their bondage, who had led them through the Red Sea to safety and to the verge of the Promised Land was dead. How could Israel go on without this towering

leader? Yet God ordained the time of Moses' death, so that His people in all ages would perceive that the promulgator of God's Law could not take a single soul into the land that typified heaven. It would be Joshua, whose name means, *savior*, who would lead the people into the land, and thereby point us not to the Law but to Jesus, the only One given under heaven among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Wednesday, February 23rd - Joshua 1: 1, 2

Moses was the Lord's servant and his death would seem to indicate that God had lost His instrument of blessing for His people. Yet, even throughout the delivering and guiding ministry of Moses, the Lord had been training up another servant, Joshua, who had been a faithful apprentice to Moses. Nothing can thwart the Lord's plan to bless His people (Jer. 29:11). The servant, Moses, may be dead, but the divine Master of Moses ever lives to guide His people (Ps. 23).

Thursday, February 24th - Joshua 1: 1, 2

The death of Moses brought upon Israel the need for a new leader. God, who was their ultimate Leader, had already made provision for new leadership during the period of Joshua's training under Moses. At this critical time, the Lord speaks to Joshua, impressing upon him the painful reality of the loss of Moses, but also the blessed reality that God would, through Joshua, lead His people into greater and fuller blessing than Moses ever had done. Joshua would, by God's enabling, cross the Jordan River that separated Israel from the Promised Land that typified the inheritance of eternal glory in heaven into which all believers in all ages will be brought by Jesus, the Head and King of His Body, the Church. Where Joshua would go, by God's direction and enabling, so would go all of the covenant people. Where the Head is, there shall the body be in due time.

February 2011

Friday, February 25th – Joshua 1: 1, 2

These verses indicate to us how Joshua was qualified for his work of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. The first qualification was Joshua's divine calling. The Lord spoke to him and directed him in his calling. Joshua was further qualified for his work by the training he had received and the character that was his as a fruit of that training. Joshua had served for a long and faithful period as the servant of Moses. He was therefore trained in submission and obedience to authority—qualities that are essential in all effective leaders. Joshua was also trained in military tactics and strategy while also gaining courage through his fighting in battles such as the one against Amalek (Ex. 17:8-16). Joshua not only learned to fight Israel's external enemies but he also cultivated a strong faithfulness to the Lord that prompted him to stand firmly against an unfaithful majority of the Lord's own people, as he and Caleb had done after the spy mission at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 13,14). God prepares His leaders far in advance of their calling and commissioning. The Lord trains them thoroughly in the days of small things so that they will succeed in the days of greater challenges. The Lord does this for His own glory as well as for the good of His people, not least among them being the leader of His calling and equipping.

Saturday, February 26th – Joshua 1: 1, 2

The work to which the Lord called Joshua is also stipulated in these verses. It was supremely

daunting work. Joshua was to cross the Jordan River, which was at that time in flood stage (Josh. 3:15). No indication is given by the Lord to Joshua as to how this was to be done. Joshua did not need any indication, for he had learned to trust the Lord and follow Him fully. The surest way for the Lord's people to know their way is for them to focus upon their knowing the God of that way. The Good Shepherd knows the way and it is the business of His sheep to know, trust, and follow Him (Heb. 12: 1, 2).

Sunday, February 27th – Joshua 1: 1, 2

Joshua's work consisted not simply in his crossing the Jordan, but also in his leading *all* of the Lord's people with him across that watery barrier and into the Promised Land. The crossing point at that time was more difficult than would have been the entrance into Canaan at Kadesh-barnea forty years earlier. That entrance would have taken Israel through the less populated and dry southern region of the land through which the people could have built up their strength gradually for their conquest of the land. Now they faced an impassable river and beyond it great, fortified cities. But while the way had become more difficult, Joshua was charged with maintaining unity of the people through all natural barriers and living enemies they were to encounter. For this calling Joshua would need and would have a strong and pure faith in His wise and almighty God.

Monday, February 28th – Joshua 1: 3, 4

The extent of God's provision for His people is set out in these verses. The national boundaries are traced in v.4. They stretched from the southern wilderness north to Lebanon and encompassed all that was west of the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. The mention of the land of the Hittites indicates perhaps a more northeastern extent than what Israel ever did manage to conquer and occupy. The point for us to see here is that our God sets our boundaries, and while we may at times find them restrictive, they are capacious enough safely to contain all of our legitimate ambitions and exertions.

Tuesday, March 1st - Joshua 1: 3, 4

Within the boundaries that the Lord set for His people they are authorized and empowered by God to exercise total dominion. Within the Promised Land, the only limits to their possession would be those self-imposed by their lack of faithful endeavor. Every place that their feet, walking by faith, would touch, they would find that their God had given to them. Surely this is on the stage of redemptive history an enactment of believers being strong in the Lord and the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10ff) and so becoming more than conquerors in and through Christ (Rom. 8:31ff).

Wednesday, March 2nd - Joshua 1: 5-9

Joshua is in these verses charged and comforted by the Lord. By these promises of divine provision, Joshua receives abundant encouragement and resources to enable him effectively and fruitfully to fulfill his God-given calling. The Lord's directives in our lives are supremely challenging; however, His gracious enabling is abundantly sufficient for us to do all things he directs us to do (Phil. 4:13).

Thursday, March 3rd - Joshua 1: 5-9

Before we consider in detail what provision God did promise to Joshua, we do well to notice what the Lord did *not* promise to provide. One would naturally expect that for such a massive campaign as Joshua was ordered to undertake, vast stores of money, weapons, soldiers, and supplies would be provided by God. Yet, what Joshua here receives from the Lord are promises. Whenever we are given promissory help, we can take encouragement only so far as we can trust the sincerity and capability of the one promising. The promises that come to us from God can be regarded by us as being great and precious because the One promising cannot lie and He possesses almighty power and infallible wisdom that nothing can thwart.

Friday, March 4th - Joshua 1: 5

The first thing God promises to Joshua and through his leadership to His people is that no human enemy would be able to prevail against them. The only defeats Israel would suffer would be traced not to the might of their foes but rather to the weakness of their faith and to the ascendancy of the Israelites' own sin. Israel's defeat at little Ai after their glorious victory over great Jericho—a defeat resulting from Achan's sin—clearly demonstrates this (Josh. 7). Well do we heed the call to watch and pray, not so much against external human enemies as against the residual sin lurking in our hearts that can easily entangle us in a way that human foes could never do.

Saturday, March 5th - Joshua 1: 5

The reason that no human foe would be able to withstand Joshua was that the presence and power of God would be with this man of His choosing. The divine presence would shield Joshua from any opposition that might arise within Israel as well as whatever attacks would surely come upon him from enemies outside of the covenant nation. God promised to be with Joshua as He had previously been with Moses. The sustaining and prevailing power of God's presence had been demonstrated for the course of forty years wherein the Lord upheld Moses. Joshua could rely on similar divine enabling, and at the end of his life he could give eloquent and moving testimony to how faithfully God had fulfilled all of His promises to him and to Israel (Josh. 23). If God is with us, what other company and help do we require? If God is for us, who in heaven or on earth or under the earth can prevail against us (Rom. 8:31ff)?

Sunday, March 6th - Joshua 1: 6, 7

Strength of mind, heart, and body would be required for Joshua to fulfill his charge. The Lord promises and begins to confer upon Joshua the requisite strength and courage by commanding him to be strong and courageous. Here the Word of the Lord is like the command of Jesus for Lazarus to come forth from his tomb. With the Word of divine command comes a gracious enabling to obey it. Yet it is not brute strength or carnal bravado that the Lord commands and confers. The strength is in the Lord's glorious might and the courage results from a grateful confidence in the Lord's securing comfort and loving care. The Apostle Paul speaks of our God giving to His people, and especially to His pastors, not a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, love, and self-control.

Monday, March 7th - Joshua 1: 7

The ultimate source of Joshua's strength and courage was the living God. The instrumental source of Joshua's strength, courage, and effective leadership was the Word of God as it was

contained in the five biblical books that had been written by Moses. Joshua is informed by the Lord that he would succeed in his divinely appointed mission precisely to the degree that he brought all of his thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds captive to the mind of the Lord as expressed in His Word. Similarly for us, the means of God's grace serve to enlighten and transform our minds, purify our hearts, and empower our service. Yet we must be like Joshua if we are truly to be edified by the means of God's grace. We must not be careless or casual but rather careful in our hearing and heeding of God's Word. Further, we must be committed to our attaining a comprehensive and vital grasp of the whole counsel of God. Every jot of Scripture contains precious power to do us infinite and eternal good.

Tuesday, March 8th - Joshua 1: 7, 8

In v.7, Joshua is told by God that his way of success in his calling was to be found in his careful observance of all of God's Word. In v.8, the Lord elaborates what it means for His servant carefully to observe His Word. First, the Word was to guide all of Joshua's thoughts, determinations, and pronouncements. To that end, Joshua was to read it, consider it, and meditate upon it at all times. Such study and meditation were to have a goal of practical piety rather than mere intellectual impact. Scripture is given to us to live by, and as we do conform all of our thoughts, feelings, words, and actions to it, we shall find that our lives are characterized by fruitful and effectual actions that show God's glory, serve for man's good, and fill us with blessed and joyful satisfaction.

Wednesday, March 9th - Joshua 1: 6-9

The Lord reinforces His consolation and exhortation to Joshua by telling him in vv.6,7,9 to be strong and courageous. In v.9, the Lord even adds a prohibition to the three positive exhortations, telling Joshua not to tremble or be dismayed. Sin makes weaklings and cowards of all people. The primal emotions Adam felt after his sin was shame (due to his fall from uprightness and his consequent corruption) and fear (due to his guilt before God). Our saving God vanquishes our corruption and guilt by mortifying our sin in the death of His Son. Our fears are our most misleading guides and our most sorry comforters. The perfect love of our God in Christ casts out all of our fears by casting out all cause we have to fear.

Thursday, March 10th - Joshua 1: 9

Faith in God vanquishes all of our fears. This is so because by faith we rightly reckon that the God whom we have offended by our sin has been reconciled to us through the person and work of His Son. If the one true and living God is for us, accepting us in His beloved Son, who or what could possibly stand against us? However, the Lord exhorts His servant not to fear but to be strong in His might (Eph. 6:10ff). By referring to Himself as *the Lord your God*, Joshua is commended to the constant company and care of the God he has come personally to know, to love, and to trust. No fears are vanquished when we are told to trust a God who remains unknown to us because we have failed to be careful to come to know Him through His Word (vv.7,8).

Friday, March 11th - Joshua 1: 10, 11

Immediately after Joshua was called and commissioned by God, he turns to command the people of God. Those who submit to the authority of the Lord find that they will have effective authority over men. Joshua issues his orders through a chain of command wherein he

commanded the officers of the people and they, in turn, informed and commanded the people. With godly authority also comes an efficient orderliness in the exercise of that authority. Chaos and disorder mark the kingdom of evil while decency and order mark the kingdom of God.

Saturday, March 12th - Joshua 1: 10, 11

Joshua's orders are exemplary in their clarity and brevity. Several significant features are contained in his orders—all of them being necessary for the people to know and observe. The first feature is that the people are to prepare provision. They had not had to do so throughout the forty years of their wilderness sojourn. The manna from heaven had fed them and would continue to do so for some time (Josh. 5:12). Yet, the Lord's servant rightly discerned that God's people would soon be subsisting from their labors and harvests in the land of Canaan. Therefore, he would have the people here at their point of entry into their covenant inheritance prepare to live as they would when their conquests were over and they were settled in their land according to the promise and power of God. Although our salvation begins with our being by God miraculously raised from our spiritual death (Eph. 2:1-7), it continues with our faithfully and diligently working out our salvation (Phil. 2:12,13).

Sunday, March 13th - Joshua 1: 10, 11

The people were to prepare provisions for themselves. This would include food and other necessities in accordance with their own personal needs, for which each person was responsible and with which each was best acquainted. The people are not ordered to prepare weapons or pontoons for the Jordan crossing. God would have them feed and nourish themselves while He would tend to the challenges in the way of their obedience to Joshua, His servant. We are not called by our God primarily to busy ourselves with many apparent practicalities but are rather to feed ourselves upon the one thing necessary for our true welfare (Lk. 10: 38-42).

Monday, March 14th - Joshua 1: 10, 11

The mission for which the people of Israel were to prepare was one of great challenges but greater encouragements. The challenges were that within three days all of the people were to break camp and march to the river Jordan and cross it while it was at flood level. The fact that they were to possess the land was also a challenge because they would be committed to a long campaign of fighting and conquering in order to possess the land. But the overwhelming encouragement was that the Lord was giving them this land. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor work in vain, but when the Lord is the giver of the land, those who strive to enter into it are guaranteed success.

Tuesday, March 15th - Joshua 1: 12-15

Two and one half of Israel's twelve tribes are specifically addressed in these verses. They are singled out because of a concession they had sought and received from Moses to settle in the territory of Gilead, east of the Jordan (Num. 32:1-33). At this time when all of Israel was preparing to cross to the land west of the Jordan, Joshua wisely reminds these minority tribes of the terms of the concession that had been granted to them by Moses. Their grant to settle their families in Gilead is acknowledged and their responsibility to have all of their men cross the Jordan and fight with their brethren until they had conquered their land is urged. Interestingly, Joshua mentions nothing about the sanction that Moses added to the concession, should the men

of these tribes fail to fulfill their responsibility (Num. 32:23). A word to the wise is sufficient, and Joshua knew that he was dealing with spiritually wise people at this point. Therefore, he leads them firmly yet not overbearingly. When spiritual people have dealings together, communications are usually good and cooperation is of a high level.

Wednesday, March 16th - Joshua 1: 16-18

In response to Joshua's reiteration of the terms of the concession that had been granted to them, the men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh give their unreserved commitment. They oblige themselves not only to cross the Jordan but also to do all that Joshua would command them to do in the course of his leading Israel in its conquest of Canaan. They pledge their obedience to Joshua just as they had performed obedience to Moses. Their governing leader would be the Lord's servant, Joshua, not their own feelings, not their personal or family agendas. By this response, the men of these tribes demonstrate that Joshua's respectful treatment of them was justified. They were men sincerely submissive to the Lord's servant because they were truly submissive to the Lord.

Thursday, March 17th - Joshua 1: 16-18

Not only do the men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh commit themselves to obey Joshua, they also commend him to the Lord in their prayers. They ask the Lord to be with His servant, making him strong and courageous—the very things that the Lord had already impressed upon Joshua. With what sweet efficiency and harmony all parties work when they all seek to know God's will and to do it by His enabling power.

Friday, March 18th - Joshua 1: 16-18

Observe how the men of these tribes bind themselves strongly to obey and follow Joshua. Although the Lord's servant did not mention the sanction Moses added to their concession, they did not construe the silence of Joshua on that point to free them of the sanction. Instead, they here willingly add to the sanction the feature of capital punishment for any who would rebel against Joshua's authority. It is a beautiful characteristic of true spirituality in the people of the Lord when each prefers others before himself in respect and honor (Phil. 2:3).

Saturday, March 19th - Joshua 1: 16-18

Joshua's respecting the good will of the men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh and the exemplary way the men of those tribes responded to this reminder reveals a significant feature of the character of the people of Israel at that time. We see here, and shall see repeatedly throughout the Book of Joshua, evidence of the mature spirituality of the people that Joshua led into Canaan. Whereas the fathers of this generation were disobedient to God and to Moses and paid for that disobedience with their lives lost in the wilderness, their children demonstrate great fidelity to the Lord and to His servant, Joshua. It may be that this was the most faithful of all of Israel's generations. It also may be that although their parents had sinned and suffered divine judgment accordingly, those parents well may have repented and, as fruit of their repentance, taught their children well the ways of the Lord before they themselves died in the wilderness. Godly discipline more often than not brings about the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Sunday, March 20th – Joshua 2: 1

While the people of Israel prepared their provisions, Joshua took steps to improve his perspective on the land of Canaan. In order to study especially the first objective of the coming campaign of conquest, Joshua selected two spies and sent them into the land to gather intelligence and report back to him. Was this a step of faith or did it represent reliance on the flesh? In view of the disastrous spy mission forty years previously at Kadesh-barnea (Num.13,14), it may appear a carnal step. However, the previous spy mission consisted of twelve men representing the tribes of Israel and reporting to the people of Israel. This current mission consisted of two spies hand-picked by Joshua, one of the two faithful spies on the previous mission. These two spies were sent by Joshua to report only to him as faithful witnesses of what actually awaited them at Jericho and in Canaan. This intelligence would be used not as an excuse to refuse entrance into the land, but as a basis for making prudent preparation effectively to enter into the Promised Land. True faith does not preclude but rather includes the wise use of means.

Monday, March 21st - Joshua 2: 1

The spies are charged to view Jericho especially. One of the factors that led to the discouragement of the people at Kadesh-barnea was that the ten spies saw and reported on much of the land and all the fortified cities and giants it contained. Joshua narrows the focus to one objective at a time, knowing that a great mountain is climbed a step at a time rather than in one great leap that is bound to fail. He who will be faithful and fruitful in many great things must learn to be faithful and diligent in smaller and fewer things first.

Tuesday, March 22nd - Joshua 2: 1

Jericho was the key city for the central portion of Canaan. If it could be defeated, it would open a way of easier conquest through the central corridor that would divide Canaan's southern region from its northern one. Then each half could be defeated in turn. This is precisely the strategy that unfolds, as we read of the central campaign in chapters 7-9, the southern campaign in chapter 10, and the northern campaign in chapter 11. It is a brilliant strategy that was conceived not so much because Joshua pondered earthly military strategy, but rather because he fixed his focus on the God of heaven and earth. He who is most heavenly-minded will always be of most earthly good (Mt. 6:33).

Wednesday, March 23rd - Joshua 2: 1

In pursuit of the mission the spies boarded in a public house owned by a harlot whose name, Rahab, is recorded in this verse because of how significantly she figures in this mission and beyond this mission, even to her being in the genealogical line of Jesus (Mt. 1: 5). The spies' choice was a wise one, for few would ask of them many questions in such a place, while at the same time they might listen to much that would indicate to them significant things about Jericho and Canaan. Superintending their choice was the hand of God, who had gracious purposes in mind for the spies' preservation and for the salvation of Rahab and her family. The most common, ordinary, and lowly features of the lives of believers can be charged with momentous significance by the guiding and providing hand of their heavenly Father.

Thursday, March 24th - Joshua 2: 2, 3

Despite all of the prudence and care of Joshua in sending the spies and of the spies in their pursuit of their mission, the mission that depends so much upon secrecy for its success is quickly

discovered by unknown sources and reported to the king of Jericho. This discovery threatens to be fatal to the spies and to their mission, and it calls into question the certainty of the promises and providing power of the Lord. It is often the case that our following our Lord by faith lands us for a time in situations that appear doomed, where the wicked seem to perceive and control all things, while we and our God appear blind and impotent. However, we shall see that appearances are misleading. Whereas the king of Jericho knows of the spies and calls at the right place for them to be delivered to him, it is he who is doomed to be frustrated while the spies and their mission and God's gracious plan to save Rahab and her family will all gloriously succeed. It is not by our avoiding threatening tribulations but by our faithfully walking through them that we enter triumphantly into the fruition of the glorious plans of our heavenly King.

Friday, March 25th - Joshua 2: 4-6

What are we to see in these verses? Many would say that we see Rahab lying. However, Scripture never once expressly condemns her as a liar, but rather commends her for her faith (Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25). We must have eyes to see and minds to grasp what is the essence of her action, what is the motive that prompts her to her action, and, most significantly, what stamp of commendation or condemnation God in His Word puts upon her action. Essentially, Rahab shielded the spies, her motive was faith, God blessed her action with success, and the Lord clearly commends her repeatedly for it in His Word. We can perceive what may or may not in fact be imperfections in her shielding these spies upon whom so much of critical importance for Israel depended, but the God of Israel treats her and her deeds as commendable in His sight. Faith prompts godly, loving deeds, it does not paralyze us with perfectionist concern over moral casuistry.

Saturday, March 26th - Joshua 2: 4-6

As the spies' prudence looked foolish and the Lord's power looked impotent once the king of Jericho discovered the spies' mission, so Rahab's hiding of the spies and handling of the king's order looks at first to be full of sin and bound to be practically ineffectual. We can identify the single instance of truth in what she said in the words: *Yes, the men came to see me* (v.4). This grain of truth is swallowed up in four misleading statements: (1) *I did not know where they were from*; (2) *the men went out*; (3) *I do not know where the men went*; and (4) *Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them*. Can anything good be at the heart of or result from so much prevarication? When the whole matter becomes clear in the light of God we shall see a commendable fulfilling of the moral law amidst the apparent violation of one feature of that law. On the final day of God's judgment many apparently righteous deeds will be seen to be sinful when the hearts and intentions of those who have done such deeds are revealed (Mt. 7: 22,23). If our hearts are pure, we shall see God (Mt. 5:8), and in the light of His holy love we shall see by the light of love that guides our actions through the most dark and apparently sinful turns (Ps. 36:9).

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Sunday, March 27th – Joshua 2: 4-6

The work of Rahab that Scripture clearly commends is her preserving of the spies whom she

welcomed in peace (Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25). The way she performed this work makes all morally attuned believers wonder about her prevarications and leads many such believers to fixate upon her deception and even condemn her for it—neither of which God in His Word does. If we consider Rahab’s action in its context, we gain a clearer understanding of her working out her salvation by faith and thereby we gain insight into our working out of our salvation. We may start by supposing that Rahab sinfully lied. Even if she did, the balance of her work according to the assessment of God in His Word is that she did a good and commendable work. Let us therefore humbly rejoice in the knowledge that our Lord counts all of our sinfully imperfect service done by faith to be good works, acceptable in His sight. When we recognize and rejoice in our Lord’s lavish grace, we avoid the bitter paralysis of an arid perfectionism.

Monday, March 28th – Joshua 2: 4-6

Another facet of the context of Rahab’s deceiving tactic is that she was but a babe in the faith, who shows, as do all spiritual babes, the emergence of her faith from the remnants of her old, sinful nature. We see a similar situation with the Syrian general, Naaman, who came to faith through his being healed of his leprosy by Elisha’s word (2 Ki. 5). Naaman asked Elisha for the Lord’s pardon when he was obliged to bow with Syria’s king in the house of Rimmon (2 Ki. 5:18). This was an obvious flaw in the faith of the newly converted Syrian general. Yet Elisha, far from rebuking or even instructing him, tells him to go in peace, rightly reckoning that as the spiritual babe grew he would come to his own increasingly holy convictions of faith and practice (2 Ki. 5:19). Our Lord graciously, patiently, and tenderly considers our frame, knowing that we are but dust (Ps. 103:14).

Tuesday, March 29th - Joshua 2: 4-6

The essential character of Rahab’s work was that she sought to make peace with God by making her peace with the people of God, whom the spies were serving. This necessarily entailed her being at war with the king of Jericho and with her unbelieving neighbors. It is a universally recognized stratagem of war that tactics of misleading one’s enemies have their necessary place. Camouflage, code words, and misinformation all have their use in saving one’s comrades and thwarting one’s enemies. The Ninth Commandment envisions one’s responsibility in open court before authorized judges to give true testimony. While that commandment generally obliges men to communicate truthfully in social and private conversation as well, the commandment does not oblige believers to enable enemies to perform their wicked designs of using the truth not lovingly but murderously.

Wednesday, March 30th - Joshua 2: 4-6

Still more light is cast on Rahab’s deception when we recall that God Himself has directed His servants at times to employ tactics designed to mislead their enemies. Joshua would later be told to deceive and thus ambush Ai with a feint attack (Josh. 8:1-9). The Lord also directed Samuel to declare that his coming to Bethlehem was to offer sacrifice while saying nothing about the real purpose of his mission, which was to anoint a new king to replace Saul (1 Sam. 16:1-3). In both of these instances, the Lord did not tell His servants to speak and act with open veracity, but rather to employ deceptive tactics. The Lord did not encourage His servants to tell the truth and trust in His almighty power, but rather to express themselves misleadingly and to behold how blind and foolish the wicked are when they are turned from their sinful purposes not with mighty works but with weak deceptive words. God Himself repeatedly deceives Satan and sinners,

allowing them to regard the Lord and His Christ as foolish and weak, when in fact they possess infallible wisdom and almighty power.

Thursday, March 31st - Joshua 2: 7

It is remarkable that God chose to secure His servants, the spies, and His people Israel not through the exertion of His almighty power but rather through the words of a spiritual babe, a single woman, who was a weaker vessel than the great men she misled. The real question for us is not to ask why Rahab employed this tactic, but why did God ordain, own, and bless it with success? At least part of the answer must be that our God is here showing us how mightily effective is faith, even if it should be as small as a mustard seed, and how even the weakest and most imperfect believers can do all things through Christ who empowers them (Phil. 4:13). Our Lord also reveals to us how foolish, weak, and vulnerable the wicked render themselves when they so easily swallow and act on the lies they love more than God's truth.

Friday, April 1st - Joshua 2: 7-9

While the king of Jericho was rendered impotent by his soldiers' pursuit of deception, Rahab further demonstrates her faith that would save her life and the lives of her family, delivering them from death, sin, and hell, and exalting them to eternal and glorious life in heaven where they would reign with Christ forever. The faith that prompted her to shield the Israelite spies now prompts her to go up to the roof where she had concealed them in order to shield herself and her family from the coming destruction. She does so by professing her faith in the Lord of salvation. The wicked love and follow lies that lead them far from the solid joys and lasting pleasures of those who know by faith that the King of heaven has come to them in saving love and power.

Saturday, April 2nd - Joshua 2: 8-11

From these verses, we learn that Rahab's faith was grounded in the facts of God's great redemption. She declares her knowledge that the Lord had given to the Jews the land of the Canaanites. She reveals how the people of Jericho and all the people of Canaan had heard of what God had done for His people as they left their Egyptian bondage and what He did through them as they defeated the enemies who sought to bar their way to the Promised Land. Rahab also reveals the way that the Canaanites had been disheartened and terrified by such awesome divine deeds done for the people of Israel. This God Rahab rightly confesses to be the God of heaven and earth and hence the righteous and sovereign King over all of creation. Yet, while the Canaanites knew God to be so exalted and mighty, they did not surrender to Him but stood fast in their determination to resist Him and His people. The wicked readily follow delusions and lies while they arrogantly refuse to yield to the God of almighty power, absolute authority, and saving love. Sin is not only stupefying; it is also suicidal.

Sunday, April 3rd - Joshua 2: 8-11

The Canaanites beheld only a God of awesome and threatening power. Rahab saw more than that. She saw a majestic and almighty God who did not demand of His people but rather who gave to them deliverance from their bondage, victory over their enemies, and a rich land and home that He had promised and was in process of providing to them. Rahab saw the whole truth about God, that He exists and that He is a gracious rewarder of those who seek Him rather than flee from Him in guilty dread (Heb. 11:6). Rahab, unlike the faithless Canaanites and unlike the

faithless ten spies who gave to Israel a bad report at Kadesh-barnea, saw God as He truly was and is, a righteous Judge and a glorious and gracious Savior.

Monday, April 4th - Joshua 2: 12, 13

Based upon her knowledge of God's sovereign power and saving grace, Rahab asks to receive the free gift of the Lord's salvation. It is not those who know the facts about the person and work of God who are saved. The devils know those facts, and so do the wicked, and they tremble. It is those and only those and all of those who call on the name of the Lord of majesty and mercy who will be saved. Here Rahab asks that the spies swear by the Lord to remember her and her family and to be to them not instruments of the Lord's righteous judgment but rather to be instruments of His saving deliverance from death. All people receive either judicial destruction or gracious deliverance from the Lord, in accordance with either their sinful doings or faithful asking.

Tuesday, April 5th - Joshua 2: 14

Rahab's request had immediate reference to the coming attack by Israel upon Jericho. However, Rahab would receive not only deliverance from that death, she would receive a lasting place among the people of God (Josh. 6:25), and would be honored with a place in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt. 1:5). We, too, may begin by asking God for the least of His mercies, but we shall find that our Lord always gives to us infinitely above what we ask (Eph. 1:3).

Wednesday, April 6th - Joshua 2: 15, 16

Rahab proved to be more than met the eye—even the eyes of the two spies. Their finding her proved to be of more vital value than anything else they encountered on their mission. Rahab received the spies, hid them, provided encouraging intelligence to them, and helped them safely to leave Jericho and return to Joshua. In many ways her faith fortified the people of God, while her faith also saved her from destruction with the people of Jericho who trusted in their high city walls that would soon fall by the hand of God working for His people. By her faith, Rahab, who lived on that wall, escaped the temporal wrath that would come upon Jericho in a few days, and she escaped from the wrath of God that would come upon all sinners on the final day of judgment. Such faith that was instrumental in saving such a sinner and making her a fruitful servant of the people of God, even though she was but a babe in the faith, is rightly regarded as more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1:7).

Thursday, April 7th - Joshua 15, 16

Rahab's faith in the living God saved her and rendered her a valuable servant of God for the blessing of Israel. She was saved not only from pending death and ultimate divine judgment and condemnation, but also she was saved from the life of harlotry she had been living, and all who could have accused her of harlotry would soon be silenced by the death that God would bring upon them. Saving faith actually saves those possessing and exercising it. Saving faith saves them from manifold sin, guilt, and misery. It also transforms sinners into loving, wise, and effectual instruments of salvation, as we find Rahab to be when she with courage and consideration not only shielded the spies in her house, but also gave them a safe departure from her house and guiding intelligence that would secure them on their return to Joshua. There are

no losers in the economy of the family of faith. All partake of great gain and share that gain lovingly and generously with their brethren.

Friday, April 8th - Joshua 2: 15, 16

Rahab's faith made her not only pious but also practical. By her faith her eyes were opened to the reality that the spies were safe in her house for only a brief time. Therefore, she helped them out of her house as she had helped them in it. She let them out for their preservation so that they might escape from the soldiers of Jericho's king. By her so doing, she sealed her salvation as well as the doom of all the inhabitants of Jericho. Rahab knew where to send the spies and for how long they should wait there until they could safely return to Joshua. Upon their return, the final steps for the destruction of Jericho would be taken. Those most heavenly-minded are always of most earthly good.

Saturday, April 9th - Joshua 2: 15, 16

Scripture notes that Rahab's house was on the wall of Jericho. God would soon tear down that wall, while His people would destroy all who lived within its vain security and had trusted in its lifeless bulk rather than in the living God. Yet here at the window of a harlot's house on the doomed wall of Jericho, a woman and two spies parted, she having helped them in their mission to destroy Jericho and its wicked inhabitants, and they having given to her a pledge of her salvation. Only God could have brought these three people together at such a strategic place, and He did so lovingly to help His people in their entrance to the Promised Land and to snatch Rahab and her family from His wrath that was about to descend upon Jericho. When we trust and follow God, we can be sure that He will lead us in ways that serve for our blessing and for the blessing of others.

Sunday, April 10th - Joshua 2: 17, 18

The promise of Rahab's salvation contained a pledge that she was obliged to apply if she were to be saved from the wrath to come. The spies designed the pledge in terms very similar to the Passover that had been instituted for them while they were in Egypt. As the destroying angel of the Lord respected the blood of the Passover lamb that the believing Israelites had put on their doors in obedience to the Lord's instruction through Moses (Ex. 12:7,12,13), so the people of the Lord on their mission of judicial destruction would respect the likeness of that blood in the red thread the spies had instructed Rahab to tie to her window. This pledge of salvation was a special dispensation for Rahab and her family. Yet in her case it pointed as effectively to the blood of the Lamb of God, shed for and applied to His people, as did the Passover. Our holy God and His redeemed people all have supreme respect for the blood of His Son's atoning sacrifice. Without a person's faith laying hold of the shedding of that blood, there can be no salvation.

Monday, April 11th - Joshua 2: 17-19

The spies impress upon Rahab that the critical thing for her own salvation as well as for the salvation of her family was that they be found in the house marked by the scarlet thread on the day of Jericho's judgment. Had the Jews not applied the Passover blood to and remained in their houses during the night of the final plague on Egypt, their first-born would have perished along with the first-born of the Egyptians. If Rahab did not apply the scarlet thread to her house and if she and her family members did not stay in that house on the day of God's judgment on Jericho,

they would have perished with the people of Jericho. Similarly, if we do not believe the apostolic gospel and look by faith to the death of Christ for our life we cannot be saved.

Tuesday, April 12th - Joshua 2: 17-19

The provision of God through the death of His Son is both infinitely precious and absolutely vital. Many of God's people, in the times before Christ's coming, perceived the saving blood of Christ through their eyes beholding the blood of the Passover lamb. Others, such as this Canaanite woman, Rahab, perceived it through its likeness in the scarlet thread. Still others, like the apostles, actually witnessed the pouring out of the precious and saving life of Christ, while many more have perceived the saving blood through their reading of it or hearing of it in God's Word. By whatever means we perceive the atoning death of the Son of God, no one is saved unless he has faith in that sacrificial and atoning blood of Jesus Christ, shed as the expiation and propitiation for sinners. God has made no other provision for the salvation of sinners.

Wednesday, April 13th – Joshua 2: 20, 21

The spies bind themselves to deliver Rahab from death so long as she binds herself to continue shielding them by her discreet silence. The mere application of the pledge of salvation would not be enough to save her or anyone else. There must be a new life characterized by one's persistent exercise of faith in Christ and repentance from one's sins. Rahab had shown fruits of such new life in her treatment of the spies, but if those fruits issued from genuine faith, they would flourish until and beyond the day of judgment upon Jericho. She who had begun with good works of faith was accordingly obliged to remain faithful or she could not be saved. Rahab did possess true faith and hence she agrees with humility and gratitude to all of the terms of her salvation. Therefore, as the spies departed from her, she applied the token and pledge of her salvation to her house because she already possessed a saving faith in her heart.

Thursday, April 14th - Joshua 2: 22

As Rahab promised to keep her word of commitment to the spies, so the spies kept strictly to the word of Rahab's direction for the preservation of their lives. The trust that the spies placed in the woman who had saved them from capture and death was well warranted, for her directions proved to be effective in covering them from their pursuers. We always do well to hear and heed the words of the faithful, because they perceive all things increasingly in the true light of God (Ps. 36:9).

Friday, April 15th - Joshua 2: 23, 24

These two spies prove themselves to be not like the ten faithless spies whose fears clouded their perception forty years previously at Kadesh-barnea. Instead, these two were like Joshua and Caleb had been on the previous spy mission. They saw all things and faithfully reported all things. They saw Jericho's high walls, just as the earlier spies had seen the fortified cities and giants in the land. Yet, these two, unlike the fearful ten and very much like the faithful two spies on the earlier mission, saw and made much of the hand of God working for them and making them to be more than conquerors, while melting their hardened enemies into water, just like the Jordan's waters that would soon part by the hand of God and offer no obstacle to them. The fearful see nothing but insurmountable threats; the faithful see that He who is with and for them is always greater than any and all who stand against them.

Saturday, April 16th - Joshua 2: 23, 24

The spies report an utter demoralization among their enemies. They rightly attribute this to the working of the hand of the Lord. How did they know that the people's hearts had melted within them? They knew it through Rahab's report. They saw the hand of God through Rahab's faithful eyes for she truly declared to them in Josh. 2:9 that she knew that the Lord had given to the Israelites not only Jericho but the whole of the land of Canaan. Rahab's faith helped them see the essential thing, the one thing necessary: that their enemies were already defeated foes because God had already begun to give His people the victory. This is how we should regard all of our foes, especially the sin that can so easily entangle us unless we, by God's grace and power, lay it aside.

Sunday, April 17th - Joshua 2: 24

The fears of the Canaanites had been wrought in them by God's ensuring that the reports of His mighty works for Israel reached their ears. Those fears proved to be prophetic of the utter downfall of Jericho. The people of God have nothing to fear so long as they faithfully revere their loving and almighty Lord. Our fears are the last things with which we need concern ourselves because our God first defeats our foes, then He vanquishes our fears. Read 1 Cor. 15:57,58; Col. 2:8-15; and Rom. 8:28-39. These passages tell us far more than Rahab told the spies!

Monday, April 18th - Joshua 3: 1

The report of the spies was virtually the report of Rahab given to them regarding the fearful dread in which the Canaanites regarded the children of Israel. Hers was a faithful report upon which the spies and Joshua placed reliance. This faithful report led to the nation of Israel walking and working by faith as we see them setting out from their camp at Shittim to head to the Jordan, across which lay their first objective of Jericho. The eagerness of Joshua is seen in his rising early in the morning in quick obedience and grateful anticipation of his leading the people into Canaan according to the Lord's promise and power. Faithful words always quicken those who faithfully receive them, filling them with desire to work out their salvation by immediate obedience and joyful expectation of God's blessing.

Tuesday, April 19th - Joshua 3: 1

Joshua's eager enthusiasm to walk in the way of the Lord was thoroughly communicated to the people of Israel. The faithful people followed their faithful leader with sincere and unreserved submission and obedience. Faithfulness is better caught than taught. A faithful leader commends himself and his plans to the Lord's people most effectively when he himself trusts in and follows gratefully the Lord (Heb. 13:7).

Wednesday, April 20th – Joshua 3: 1

The faith of Joshua and the children of Israel is evident in their quick and complete move from their camp in Shittim to the banks of the Jordan River. Joshua and all of the people moved from a safe and comfortable camp that was located in the fertile region that had been given to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh (Num. 31:1-5). All of Israel traveled eight miles to the arid land through which the Jordan River ran. There they faced a river in flood stage (Josh. 3:15), and, beyond it, the fortified city of Jericho and the enemy-infested territory of Canaan. But while seeing these obstacles in their way, they by faith rightly seized upon the truth

that their Lord, the God of mercies and might, had promised to them the land toward which they were headed, and that God was already beginning to give them the land. Faith regards obstacles but relies upon the God who graciously promises and powerfully provides all that He pledges Himself to give to His people (Rom. 4:18-21).

Thursday, April 21st - Joshua 3: 1-4

Once the children of Israel reached the Jordan, they camped there for three days. Presumably they took time to make what provision they could for their crossing of the river. Significantly, there is no mention of them building boats or bridges or seeking fording places. Instead, they knew they were where the Lord wanted them and they were ready to do His will as soon as He revealed it. The people rightly reckoned that their God would direct and empower them to enter Canaan in His perfect timing and effectual way. The very best preparation we can make for any situation is when we prepare our ears to hear and our wills to obey the Word of our God, whether He tells us to wait or to march (Ps. 23:2).

Friday, April 22nd - Joshua 3: 1-4

The people's faithful waiting was rewarded in due course by the Lord's revealing to them the way He would lead them into the land. The way of God's leading was for His people to set and keep their focus upon the ark of their Lord's covenant that symbolized their salvation by sovereign divine grace. Believers can never go astray so long as they keep their attention vitally fixed upon the holy ordinances of God's saving grace. Those ordinances are as the sun's rays shining forth from the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. So long as our hearts and minds are fixed on Christ crucified, we shall neither aim amiss nor be overcome as we run the race set before us by our God, fixing our eyes on our Christ (Heb. 12:1,2).

Saturday, April 23rd - Joshua 3: 1-4

Two divine names are used by Joshua's officers as they communicate the Lord's way to His people. The first is God's covenant name that we translate: *Lord*. This name implies divine sovereignty and saving mercy. The second name is one we translate: *God*. This name has the connotation of almighty power like that used to create the world out of nothing. This Lord and God is designated as being the God of Israel (*your God*). As long as the people of God are united by a vital faith to this God of mercy and might, knowing that He is for them and that nothing can separate them from His love, they will always be strengthened with divine might (Eph. 6:10ff) and made more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37-39).

Sunday, April 24th - Joshua 3: 1-4

The ark of the Lord's covenant contained the tables of God's Ten Commandments, a golden jar containing manna, and Aaron's rod that had budded (Heb. 9:4). These contents symbolized the enlightening Word of God, the empowering nourishment of God, and the authorized guidance and protection of God—all for His people. No one who truly follows the essence of what that ark contained will ever know anything except ultimate success and holy satisfaction.

Monday, April 25th - Joshua 3: 1-4

The ark was to be on the move as God prescribed. Hence, mention is made of the Levitical

priests carrying it. Those priests represent the living ministers of God's saving grace and sanctifying ordinances. The people are told that when they saw the ark being carried by the priests, they were to set out from their place and go after it. It is not the personal pleasures, passions, or even prudent thoughts of the Christian that guide him to secure success. It is the Word and ordinances of God faithfully ministered and faithfully received that lead the Christian in the way of divine blessing and blessed fruitfulness.

Tuesday, April 26th - Joshua 3: 1-4

The people are told to follow the ark when it was carried by the priests. However, they are told not to follow it too closely. A distance of 2,000 cubits (about 1,000 yards, or just over half a mile) was to separate them from the ark. This feature of the people's guidance does not signify any lack of close intimacy that God's people are graciously enabled to have with their saving Lord. In Josh. 3:10 these very people are told that their God is among them (cf., *Christ in you, the hope of glory*, Col. 1:27). Instead, this distance of separation implies a reverent respect for the essential difference between creatures—even redeemed creatures—and their unique, infinite, and eternal Creator. This distance also would serve the practical purpose of enabling all of God's people to see for themselves that the ark (and all it represented of the person and work of their God) not only showed them the way but also made that way to open before them. Those who hold God in highest reverence best perceive the infallible wisdom, unchanging love, and almighty power of their Lord, and all of their fears, doubts, and enemies are consequently vanquished.

April 2011

The following notes were first published in June/July 1991

Wednesday, April 27th - Proverbs 17: 1

The amount of material possessions we have does not matter so much as does the spirit by which we acquire and in which we enjoy them. The carnal man wants many things, and is willing to fight for them, foolishly thinking that his possessing them will satisfy him. The godly one knows better, realizing that there is only one thing necessary (Lk. 10:42), which to possess is to enjoy the secret of being content in all circumstances (Phil. 4:11-13).

Thursday, April 28th - Proverbs 17: 2,6,21,25

The mutual ties of natural relationships grow deeper and more blessed as the Lord expands a family and sustains the lives of its members (v.6). The modern realities of the nuclear family (i.e., parents with their children), or sub-nuclear family (i.e., one parent family), are exceedingly impoverished when compared to the biblical pattern of a vital, interacting, multi-generational family. However, the mere begetting of progeny is no automatic blessing. Foolish children rob their parents of joy and add to them sorrow and bitterness (vv.21,25). A wise and godly servant will be, at least by godly as opposed to doting parents, more highly esteemed, more surely trusted, and promoted to greater responsibility and reward than will be a foolish son (v.2). Whereas blood may be thicker than water, the spirit of godliness is thicker than both.

Friday, April 29th - Proverbs 17: 3

There are natural tools and procedures for the purging of impurities from natural elements. But

man's heart is so hidden, so deceptive, his thought and motives so inextricably tangled with sin, that there are no natural means to purge one's heart and mind of sin. Secular psychology may attempt to succeed here, but it will fail in everything except extracting from us the payment of frightful fees. Only Christ, whose eyes are like a flame of piercing and purging fire (Rev. 1:14), can penetrate and purify our hearts. How grateful we should be when He does so.

Saturday, April 30th - Proverbs 17: 4,11

One reason why men speak lies is because there is a market for such speech. There is an affinity between all wicked liars. They supply destructive lies because they know that there are many, like themselves, who will credit their deceptive communications. But how suicidal is this appetite for lying fare! When a man's heart does not hunger for the truth, cruel liars come to him, being judicially sent by the God of truth, against whom members of the league of liars—both listening and speaking—have rebelled.

Sunday, May 1st - Proverbs 17: 5,9,17

Rather than our participating in the infernal fellowship of liars (vv.4,11), or that of cynical mockers (v.5), who deride the poor man as though he were a mere despicable object, we were made to have fellowship in love and charity and reciprocal service. Our God made all men, and when we behold a fellow creature in need of anything, or in trouble, we do right to love through thick and thin, realizing that the supply the Lord has given us is entrusted to us to share with those in adversity (v.17). The Lord notes attitudes and actions contrary to holy charity, taking such offenses personally, and responding appropriately (v.5). Such charity extends beyond mere material provision. It endeavors to cover transgression (1 Pet. 4:8). The man who loves knows that sin inheres in all men, impoverishing individuals and endangering relationships. Rather than magnify sin by its broadcast, the charitable soul, realizing that he, too, is not without sin, refuses to cast stones, but rather commits others to Christ, who alone deals justly, graciously, and effectively with sin.

Monday, May 2nd - Proverbs 17: 7,12

Abundant speech, no matter how excellent it may seem, is inappropriate coming from a fool. However fine and numerous his words, a fool speaks from the folly of his heart, and he should be avoided, as one would avoid an angry animal. Foolish dithering ultimately proves not only obnoxious, but detrimental. Much worse, however, is when a responsible character in authority speaks lies. He is in position to do great damage, for whereas we are warned to avoid fools, we are told to submit to those in authority over us. Let us then pray for the integrity of our leaders, and pray for our own integrity, especially if we are in positions of authority.

Tuesday, May 3rd - Proverbs 17: 8,16,23

Bribes may seem to be keys to unlock every door. Yet bribes only work with the wicked, motivating them perhaps to facilitate the material prosperity of the one offering the bribe (v.8), but at the price of justice being perverted (v.23). The best things in life, the most precious things, such as love and wisdom, cannot be bought and certainly are not subject to bribery (Acts 8:18-20). They are gifts bestowed upon us by the Lord, not as commodities to be possessed, but as powers blessedly infusing and transforming our characters and our lives in every way.

Wednesday, May 4th - Proverbs 17: 10

A person who has true understanding realizes that he is far from perfect. Thus, he does not resist legitimate rebuke, construing it as a challenge threatening to injure him, but rather he sees such rebuke as directed to specific areas in his life that need correction. He delights to be free from the bondage of his error, and so accepts rebuke, not only outwardly, but directs it to his heart that it might purify him deeply. A fool hardens himself against words of rebuke, and even against the outward blows of discipline. He remains addicted to his folly, which kills him, not least by making him impregnable to godly correction. Which of these do we tend more to resemble?

Thursday, May 5th - Proverbs 17: 13,15,26

As far as it lies in our power, we should do everything to reward and promote good, while putting down evil. When men are tempted to condone evil deeds or persons, as happens often in families where parents dote on wild and wicked children, they do well to remember that such justifying of the wicked necessarily involves condemning the righteous as the other side of the same coin. Such giving of evil to good souls, who have themselves given good, will result in one's inheriting nothing but evil as the just reward given by God. Sin within us gives us an affinity with wicked men, and inclines us to some degree to penalize the righteous. But we must learn to crucify such unholy and ungrateful sin, for the wicked only wound us, whereas the righteous love and serve us for our highest welfare.

Friday, May 6th - Proverbs 17: 14

We say that water over the dam can never be retrieved and should be forgotten. When one opens a hole in a dam, water also irretrievably escapes. It is far easier to open such a place in a structure holding water, than to repair it once a breach is opened. Thus with strife, it is far easier to start a quarrel than to end it. Furthermore, once words of strife escape our lips, they can never be retrieved, and even their retraction leaves a sore wound. It is far better to consider and if possible to contain our words, than to let loose a flood of combative communication.

Saturday, May 7th - Proverbs 17: 18

The counsel against one's becoming surety for another (cf. 6:1-5) is not based on callous, economic greed, but is rather based on a wise and responsible stewardship, which recognizes that in many respects, including economic, each one should bear his own load (Gal. 6:5). One's promoting individual responsibility is not inconsistent with charitable generosity. We are not here forbidden to *give* to others, but rather we are told to avoid incurring a share in their debt. If one chooses to incur debt, he should be prepared to go it alone and face the possible consequences of his failure to repay. Therefore this counsel serves to foster wise and responsible attitudes all around.

Sunday, May 8th - Proverbs 17: 19

A righteous man must at times enter into strife as he endeavors to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3), but he does not love such strife. Yet those who love sin actually enjoy fighting and inflicting pain on others. Such lovers of strife serve their father, the devil, who is a liar, a murderer, and who is also exceedingly proud. Therefore, this verse adds an observation on pride. The man who exalts his door, namely, who gives the appearance that only the high and mighty are allowed access to him, unwittingly seeks destruction. Satan aspired to a station higher than he deserved, and was cast down accordingly (Is. 14:13-17). He continues to inspire

others to adopt a similar course. Let us resist him by cultivating humility, and the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Monday, May 9th - Proverbs 17: 20,24

Verse 24 pictures an understanding soul who is composed and contented with the treasures of wisdom, in which he reposes with delight, security, and profit. In contrast, a fool is shown to be restless, never contented, but always on a vain quest to fill his vacuous soul. Though such a fool may encounter good and loving souls, who would care for him and seek to show him a better way to live in Christ, such perverted hearts see no good in the godly or in their God. Hence they claim never to find what is good, and they carry on speaking perversions which serve only to bring trouble upon themselves. How poor and pitiful are such fools! How rich are those possessing a true understanding!

Tuesday, May 10th - Proverbs 17: 22

A joyful heart, being medicinal in every way, should be zealously prized and protected. For the alternative, ultimately, is a broken spirit, which saps strength and resiliency. Sin and its consequences of guilt and fear serve to break our spirits. But there is joy in Christ, and only in Christ. His joy is our strength (Neh. 8:10), and when we abide in Him, His joy is made full in us (Jn. 15:11), being formed within us as a fruit of His indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

Wednesday, May 11th - Proverbs 17: 27,28

The joy of the Lord, spoken of in yesterday's reading, is not the giddy and boisterous spectacle which some would display in the name of joy. Rather, it is a quiet and wise assurance, founded on the possession of salvation in Christ, and fueled by progressive sanctification in Him. Our Lord would always have us to *be* joyful, wise, knowledgeable, and understanding, rather than to spend our time and energies merely *appearing* so. In the same way, our spirituality is to be true, rather than merely something about which we talk (Mt. 6). We should never equate a cool and quiet spirit with a joyless or ignorant heart. True virtues manifest themselves by quality, not quantity of display.

Thursday, May 12th - Proverbs 18: 1,2

Although our dependence on Christ produces in us a liberating self sufficiency (Phil. 4:11-13), we remain members one of another in the body of Christ, bound together by ties of mutual love and service (Phil. 2:1-4). In view of this, we see the perversity of the separatist, who holds himself aloof from fellow Christians. One who withdraws from fellowship without just cause directly opposes the instruction of God's Word, which tells us not to be concerned only for our own interests (Phil. 2:4). The separatist also is foolish, for instead of his humbly seeking to benefit from the wisdom of others, he delights only in telling his own trivial tale, as if others were as engrossed in his idiosyncratic thoughts as he is himself. There is, however, godly and just cause for separation, for which read Rom. 16:17,18.

Friday, May 13th - Proverbs 18: 3,6,7

The wicked person justly deserves contempt and reproach, but foolishly attempts to divert his condemnation onto others. Consequently, he speaks scornfully against others. But his contemptuous speech fails in its aim, as those so wounded thereby retaliate in self-defense. Therefore, the ruin that the wicked seeks to cast upon others returns with redoubled

force upon his own head. This reaction not only describes a fact of life, but also speaks of a righteous response to wicked projections, which justly call for measured blows of discipline.

Saturday, May 14th - Proverbs 18: 4,8

The source of a wise soul's communications is deep, issuing in clear, refreshing outpourings. Such wise words, known by their open, transparent, and expansive quality, can safely be and should surely be taken to heart. It is far otherwise with the murky whisperings of the wicked. We should beware of those specializing in private conferences, whose soft and subtle speech penetrates our hearts. There is something mesmerizing about hushed communications, so we must not judge simply by how another's words make us feel. Rather we must judge on the basis of truth and love, which are expressed openly and freely.

Sunday, May 15th - Proverbs 18: 5

Being partial to the wicked necessarily entails being unjust to the righteous. This is true objectively because when a premium is placed upon sin, righteous character and action necessarily suffer devaluation. It is also true subjectively because the one who nurtures and acts in accordance with his affinity for wickedness will have an equal aversion to righteousness. The one so prizing the wicked and penalizing the righteous is not good and does no good. Such a one will answer to the good Lord for such evil.

Monday, May 16th - Proverbs 18: 9

Not only is the sluggard who avoids work condemned throughout the Book of Proverbs, but here we see that the slacker, who works but does so poorly, is also censured. We are called, and by divine grace equipped, to do all of our work well (Col. 3:23,24). Excellence and diligence are not options for the believer. The world may accept the minimalist attitude toward work, but the Word of God reveals the slacker to be kin to one who will destroy. Not only does slackness fail to help others as much as it should, but it positively serves to hurt others, especially those who either voluntarily or under circumstantial compulsion attempt to take up the slack.

Tuesday, May 17th - Proverbs 18: 10

The name of the Lord is not simply a nominal designation, but rather a description of the divine character. God reveals His many-faceted character through a number of names in Scripture. He is, for example, the God who provides, the almighty God, the gracious, covenant making and keeping God. The character of God, however, is most clearly and fully disclosed to us in Christ (Jn. 14:9; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Heb. 1:1,3). The righteous boast in the name of Jesus Christ above all others, running into Him and standing in Him and the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10ff). This not only protects us in evil days, but it lifts us to the height of heaven on all days (Col. 3:1-3).

Wednesday, May 18th - Proverbs 18: 10,11,24

In contrast to the security a believer has in the Lord (v.10) we see the sort of security the worldly seek. Mammon can appear so much more substantial than the Lord, who is Spirit. Monetary empires can seem to be more expansive than the Word of Lord's intensive promise of God's indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus the rich man is shown to have a strong city as opposed to the strong tower of the righteous. But the strength and expansiveness of wealth is only imagined, as

the rich fool discovered (Lk. 12:13-21). Great quantity of finances or friends (v.24) cannot substitute for vital faith in and loving communion with the Lord, the pearl of greatest price and the one friend necessary.

Thursday, May 19th - Proverbs 18: 11,12

Walls of wealth often have pride as their foundation. If so, they call for divine demolition. However, the humble soul seeks his protection and provision not in what he himself can amass, but rather in what God has redeemingly accomplished in Christ. Accordingly, the humble person enjoys lasting security, satisfaction, and honor above what the proud could ever imagine, let alone attain and maintain.

Friday, May 20th - Proverbs 18: 13,17

Prejudiced and ill-considered judgment and action always result in folly and shame returning upon the head of those so judging and acting. This is so because part of a story—one person's perception of a matter—may seem so persuasive as to be unanswerable. But there usually are other persons and points of view that need to be considered if one is to perceive the truth in an issue. We should learn patiently to hear all sides of a matter before forming and expressing our opinion. For it is not the first to present his case, however plausible it may appear, who wins the day; rather, it is the one whose case can bear the scrutiny of the One who examines him fully and infallibly now (Heb. 4:12,13), and finally on the last day.

Saturday, May 21st - Proverbs 18: 14

One of the worst casualties of the hasty, insufficient judgment considered in yesterday's reading is the spirit of the one judged unjustly, unwisely, or unlovingly. A man can bear bodily ills and circumstantial reversals, but when the malice or heedless insensitivity of others penetrates his heart and breaks his spirit, it is unendurable. Let us then determine to employ godly wisdom, charity, and generosity in our evaluations of and our dealings with others, lest we bear guilt for our serving to inflict this sort of pain upon them. Let us also determine to put on the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14), lest the inconsiderateness and malice of others pierce our poor hearts and break our spirits.

Sunday, May 22nd - Proverbs 18: 15

The heart of the prudent hungers for true knowledge of the Lord and of His manifold provision. Such a heart seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness is filled with that which it seeks, and all other good things in addition (Mt. 6:33). But note that there is an active seeking. The heart acquires only that which the ear hears and the hand seeks. Hence, we should ever engage and direct our senses toward the means of God's grace, especially tuning our ears to seek the faithful preaching of God's Word, along with the sanctifying sound of godly conversation.

Monday, May 23rd - Proverbs 18: 16,23

These verses describe attitudes that *are*, rather than those which *should be*. Members of a godless society invariably overestimate the value and power of money. Consequently, the rich can become abusively ill mannered in their dealings with others, calculating that their money will open far more doors than will their good manners. On the other hand, the poor are forced to bow and grovel, since their lack of cash gives them no leverage with which to move

others. Such distinctions based on mere financial factors should not be. Though they arise, alas, even in Christian fellowships, God's Word soundly condemns them when they do (Jas. 2:1-7). True distinctions in society are moral and spiritual. The one who has received God's gift of salvation in Christ is truly rich. Yet such spiritual riches do not intoxicate, leading to haughty behavior, but rather inspire to love and good works of service for others.

Tuesday, May 24th - Proverbs 18: 18

The casting of the lot may have been the means of last resort in deciding temporal matters. But now we have the full manifestation of God in Christ presented in Scripture. The completed canon of Scripture is sufficient for us to decide all matters of faith and life. Beyond this there is, of course, the Lord Himself, who justly and gloriously decides all matters in time and on the last day.

Wednesday, May 25th - Proverbs 18: 19

The more intimate the relationship against which a man sins, the more difficult it is for that relationship to be restored. This is so psychologically because the wounded party suffers pain commensurate with the degree of personal vulnerability he had allowed in the relationship. The wounded one would naturally recoil from such betrayal of intimacy, and defensively resist the possibility of similar future injury. But this phenomenon is manifested due not only to psychological factors, but also due to the basic constitution of man made in God's image. The fact is that sins against intimates are the most heinous, for they are sins against love and trust. Such sins were committed by Lucifer and by Judas. Let us be exceedingly careful, therefore, not to betray close relationships, as those fiends did. Instead, let us prize and nurture our closest relationships.

Thursday, May 26th - Proverbs 18: 20,21

Our words have tremendous power to result in good or evil. This is due to the fact that although words seem insubstantial, they serve to reveal and convey our hearts, from which flow the issues of life for good or ill (Mt. 15:18,19). Thus, the fruit produced by our speech can be bitter and poisonous, or sweet and healthy, depending upon the character of our hearts. When we determine by God's grace to fill our hearts with love, making our tongues instruments to convey that love, then we shall and others will delight in our communications (1 Cor. 13:1).

Friday, May 27th - Proverbs 18: 22

There is an implicit proviso in this verse. It is only when we marry in the Lord that we find the good thing spoken of here in marriage. There are plenty of verses throughout Proverbs that show us the miserable state endured in godless marriages. However, when the Lord favors one with a life's mate of His choosing, the good and happiness enjoyed by both parties is simply indescribable. Such a good thing is found, not when one looks for it, but when one looks for the Lord, the Giver of all that is good and pleasant (Mt. 6:33).

Saturday, May 28th – Joshua 3: 3, 4

The Lord's people are told to keep their distance from the ark specifically because the Lord would be leading them in a new way. The prescribed distance would enable all of the people to see the ark and know from its location the way by which they should go. Significantly, the people are told, *for you have not passed this way before*. This refers to more than their

topographical ignorance. These people were about to be led dry-shod through the parted Jordan River and for several circuits around Jericho before their blowing of horns would signal (not cause) its walls to fall. Our God leads us by His Word, ordinances, and Spirit in ways we would never experience or imagine were we to lean on our own understanding instead of trusting in the Him with all our hearts.

Sunday, May 29th - Joshua 3: 5

In addition to the command the officers gave to the people regarding how they were to follow the ark as the Levitical priests carried it, Joshua himself commands the people to consecrate themselves as an essential part of their preparation to cross the Jordan. The ordinances of the Lord are potent means of His grace but they must be personally and vitally applied by those partaking of them as they exercise their faith, mortify their sin, and seek to be sanctified and grow in that holiness without which they could not see their Lord. Only a consecrated people are worthy and willing to see and follow the wondrous ways of God.

Monday, May 30th - Joshua 3: 5

As the redeemed and beloved children of the Lord we should seek to live consecrated lives at all times. However, there are times such as when we prepare to partake of the Lord's Supper, when we should take special pains to mortify our sins and devote ourselves in holy love to our Lord. In today's verse, Joshua specifies what may seem to us a curious reason for the people to consecrate themselves. He says that on the next day the Lord would do wonders among them. The connection between this call and the reason given is that unless we are filled with holy love for our God and humble gratitude for His saving work, we can grow proud and presumptuous when we are made recipients of His almighty deeds of mercy and lavish kindness.

Tuesday, May 31st - Joshua 3: 6

Joshua's final words are to the priests, He tells them to take up the ark and cross the Jordan ahead of the people who would follow. Here we are reminded that the Lord's priests (and now His pastors) are to lead God's people in consecration, in knowing and following the ways of the Lord, and in the victory in which the Lord always leads His people (1 Cor. 15:57).

Wednesday, June 1st - Joshua 3: 7, 8

Joshua's words in vv.5,6 concerning the Lord's wonders and the priests taking up the ark to lead the people across the Jordan, were not spoken from Joshua's own logic or hopes or guessing. We learn in vv.7-13 that the Lord had given to Joshua specific information and instruction regarding how Israel would cross the Jordan. The sense of the imperfect tense of the verb *to speak* in v.7 is that Joshua spoke as he did to the officers (v.2), people (v.5), and priests (v.6) because the Lord was speaking to Him, telling him of the wonders He would accomplish for His people. When our minds are informed by the Word of God our feet will never stumble as we walk in His way.

Thursday, June 2nd - Joshua 3: 7, 8

The Lord not only tells Joshua what to command the priests, but He also informs His servant why He determined to lead His people in such a wondrous way across the Jordan. The Lord, who does all things to manifest the glory of His name, would perform the wonder of parting the Jordan in accordance with Joshua's declaration so that Joshua would be exalted in Israel's

sight. The glory of the Lord always entails the highest good of His people and especially of His servants whom He chooses to lead His people. This wonder would be but the beginning of God's exalting His servant so that His people then would be trained to trust in the servant He had chosen to lead them in the way of their salvation. Similarly, God granted Jesus, our Joshua, miraculous power so that He would be exalted in our sight and evoke our confidence in Him who is our Savior.

Friday, June 3rd - Joshua 3: 7, 8

The Lord would have His people, at this critical time in their history and through all ages, to perceive the connection between His servants Moses and Joshua. Just as Moses was God's chosen instrument to lead the people of God out of their bondage and oppression in Egypt, so Joshua was God's chosen servant to lead the people into the full and positive blessedness of the Promised Land. Both servants were used by God to lead His people through miraculously divided waters: Moses having divided the Red Sea and Joshua dividing the Jordan River. Both servants were providers of vital access through impassable barriers. What these men and the passages they provided signify is the access Christ has made for us out of our sins and into the unspeakable glories of His heavenly kingdom (Heb. 9:11-15; 10:19-25).

Saturday, June 4th - Joshua 3: 9

Joshua and the people of Israel are camped on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. They are there in readiness to cross the river, attack the fortified city of Jericho, and conquer all of Canaan. In preparation for such a massive military and logistical task, they are told by Joshua to do only two things: consecrate themselves (v.5), and hear the words of the Lord their God (v.9). Our natural inclination is to turn our hands to obvious practical necessities, but our new, spiritual inclination should be to turn our ears to hear God's Word and our hearts to obey that Word.

Sunday, June 5th - Joshua 3: 9

Personal preparation increases one's right perception of God's Word. It was after the people had consecrated themselves (v.5) that they were called to hear the Word of the Lord. Our knowing rightly the ways and will of our Lord increases when we reverently prepare ourselves to enjoy holy and loving communion with Him as He speaks to us from His Word.

Monday, June 6th - Joshua 3: 7-9

Before the Lord spoke to His people through Joshua, He spoke to Joshua directly, as He had done with Moses. This special intimacy with the Lord would be one aspect of Joshua's growing exaltation in the eyes of all Israel. It may seem as though Joshua hardly needed to be exalted in the sight of Israel. The people already respected him and heard and obeyed him as their leader. But that day their respect would take a great and ever growing leap, as they would see him as God's chosen instrument for their blessing. Through Joshua's intimacy with the Lord and his speaking God's words to Israel, the people would be drawn into a closer and more effectual walk with their God. Only God can raise up or cast down a person in His sight as well as the sight of others. God would exalt Joshua among His people and for His people's growth in true and exalting godliness.

Tuesday, June 7th - Joshua 3: 9, 10

Joshua would be exalted by God (v.7) for a gracious and godly purpose that pertained to the sons

of Israel. The Lord would work wonders to validate Joshua's leadership, but also to give assurance to the people that the living God was dwelling *among* them and doing great things *for* them. Therefore, the servant of God destined to be exalted in the sight of all Israel delivers news to the people that would immediately lift their hopes and encourage them with the assurance that their God would empower them to vanquish all of their enemies. The indwelling nearness of our God to us is our supreme good (Ps. 73:28). If this God is for us, who or what can ultimately prevail against us (Rom. 8:31ff)?

Wednesday, June 8th - Joshua 3: 9, 10

The precise way in which the Lord would exalt Joshua was by His informing His chosen servant of His gracious purposes for His people, and having Joshua declare to Israel the divine purposes that would in turn be fulfilled by the almighty arm of the Lord. Joshua would be exalted by his nearness to God, and he would, in turn, be God's instrument of exalting Israel by his declaring to them the Lord's Word. Consequently, the people would come humbly but with confident assurance to expect that they would experience the Lord's gracious and almighty compassions. Accordingly, their trust in and devotion to their God would not diminish but would increase. We can be assured of the loving nearness of our God and of our security and triumphant exaltation in Him through faith in our exalted Jesus, the living Word of God (Jn. 1:1ff) and the beloved Son and servant of God who has accomplished our redemption (Col. 3:1-4).

Thursday, June 9th - Joshua 3: 10

Joshua declares to the people of Israel the manifold magnitude of their enemies. He specifies a seven-fold army of foes waiting for them and arrayed against them across the Jordan. Although such a challenge was great, Joshua encourages the people to know and rely upon the greater God who was among them and who would fight for them. Faith sees all things in their true perspective. The prophet's eyes beheld the Syrian army sent to arrest him as did the eyes of his servant, but Elisha also beheld the unseen and prevaingly greater hosts of the Lord (2 Ki. 6:8-17). Abraham was not blind to the aged weakness of his own body and the deadness of Sarah's womb, but he grew strong in faith and believed in the God who promised him a son (Rom. 4:1-3, 18-22). We who have faith in our gracious and almighty God, who in Christ is for us, need not fear any persons or powers in all of creation who may stand against us (Rom. 8:31-39).

Friday, June 10th - Joshua 3: 10-13

Our supreme security, honor, and exaltation are found in our God being among and for us as His beloved people. His love commits Him to us and His power secures us from all of our enemies. Therefore, the people of Israel are here told to consecrate themselves to this God, to hear His Word through His servant, Joshua, and to believe that their God would work wonders for them beyond what they could ask or think. Consecration to and communion with this God takes place before the people take a step to cross the Jordan. We learn from this that piety should ever precede practical endeavor. Otherwise, we will rely on our own understanding and frail power rather than trust in our wise and almighty Lord with all of our hearts (Prov. 3:5,6).

Saturday, June 11th - Joshua 3: 10-13

In v.10, Joshua emphatically assures Israel that theirs was a faith not in mere religious notions but rather in the one true and living God. Joshua declares that this God would certainly dispossess the numerous indigenous peoples of the Promised Land. But the Lord's servant

makes clear that God would do this *before* His people, meaning that Israel would not only witness the wonders of God but they would participate in those wonders. The people of Israel would do the crossing of the river, the marching and fighting, but all in the wake of the prevailing power of their God. The Lord would be the ultimate and effective cause of their victories, while the people would be instrumental participators in His triumphs. Similarly, we who are in Christ are called to work out our salvation, knowing that it is the living God who is at work in us to will and do His good pleasure (Phil 2:12,13).

Sunday, June 12th - Joshua 3: 10-13

The foundation of and first step toward Israel's conquest of Canaan was their pious waiting upon the Lord as they consecrated themselves and heard and believed His Word through Joshua. The first practical step that was to issue from their piety was for them to move toward and martially close with their enemies. But there was the considerable challenge of the Jordan River that had to be crossed before the armed people of God could engage with their enemies. The way that God reveals that He would lead His people across the Jordan is infinitely removed from the ways of men. There would be no boats, no bridges, but priests would lead the people into the waters of the Jordan. Those priests would carry the ark of the covenant that would seem a pressing burden to men who needed buoyancy to keep from drowning in those waters. Their feet would stand in the waters, not walk over them on a bridge or pass over them in a boat. God's ways seem foolish and suicidal to faithless people. It would seem that God wanted to drown His people rather than dispossess their enemies. But ways of apparent death are the ways of the God of life. To all of these strange instructions that seemed designed to lead God's people to their deaths, there is one word of promise given by God that would vindicate the divine counsel and the faith of the people who trusted in the Lord and obeyed His Word. God promised that the waters would be parted by His hand, just as had occurred with Moses and Israel at the Red Sea. The way of God to life and victory leads always through many deaths to sense and self.

Monday, June 13th - Joshua 3: 10-13

Clearly, neither the steps of the priests nor the ark they carried were causative forces of the river's parting. However, all that the priests and people would do in obedience to God's instructions would be demonstrative of their faith in the living God who had created all waters and divided them by land and determined their boundaries according to His will (Gen. 1:9,10; Ps. 104:5-9). The people without God could not divide such waters, so they would never have considered attempting to do so. God without the people could divide and had divided such waters for the sake of His glory and His people's good. Without Jesus, we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5), but with Him we can do all things, even those far beyond our imagining (Phil. 4:13).

Tuesday, June 14th - Joshua 3: 10-13

These words of divine revelation through Joshua are all confounding to human sense and logic. Each instruction is understandable in itself and could be easily done by the priests and the people. The priests were simply to carry the ark and the people were to follow. However, when these words are considered in the context of Israel's need to cross the Jordan, they make no natural sense. Nothing the priests or people did in obedience to their God-given instructions could accomplish their goal. The efficacy of the crossing depended entirely upon the almighty

power of God working in fulfillment of His promise and doing so through the apparent weakness and folly of His people's believing and walking as if God would do the incredible deed. There is nothing God's Word to convince a man rationally to commit himself to the weakness and folly of the promises of a Man crucified thousands of years ago. Only the demonstrated power of God to raise such a Man from the dead and to change the lives of all who believe in Him can lead one to trust in and rely upon such weakness. Only the fidelity of God to keep His promises vindicates the wisdom of His employing such apparent foolishness to accomplish His glorious and gracious will.

Wednesday, June 15th - Joshua 3: 10-13

Among these revealing and instructive words—all of them confounding to human logic—the Lord tells His people to elect twelve men, one from each tribe. The Lord's purpose in this is not stipulated at this point, but becomes clear and is seen to be vital for the future welfare of the Church in every age. Through their work, there would be enduring evidence that the Lord's people, in the course of their trusting and walking in the way of their God, experience the almighty arm of the Lord making a way miraculously for them through the Jordan. These twelve would serve to erect an enduring testimony to the gracious and almighty works of God so that their descendants would be blessed not by their seeing with their own eyes, but by their believing with their hearts that God makes possible ways of blessing that are impossible for men to effect.

Thursday, June 16th - Joshua 3: 14-17

In these verses, Scripture records for us the outcome of the people of Israel believing and acting on the clear Word of God and relying on His infallible wisdom and on His integrity and power to do what He had promised. The priests and the people put feet to their faith, taking the few simple steps God had directed them to take. Far from their sinking beneath the Jordan's waters, they saw the gracious and miraculous power of God open a dry crossing for them all. Only our truly consecrated devotion to our living God prepares us rightly and blessedly to perceive and participate in His wondrous works.

Friday, June 17th - Joshua 3: 14

This verse records the unwavering obedience of the people of Israel to the words of their God. They do not hesitate to leave their tents and head for the watery barrier. They do not deviate from any of their instructions. Their faithful walk is the fruit of their believing consecration to their God, and the amazing fruit of that faithful consecration vindicates the Word, wisdom, love, and power of God as well as the people's trusting and obedient reliance upon their living God and His Word and works on their behalf. How much blessing we gain by our believing obedience to our redeeming Lord! How much blessing and usefulness in His service we forfeit whenever we take counsel from our fears rather than from His Word!

Saturday, June 18th - Joshua 3: 14, 15

The test of the people's faith was that they were to set out from their tents and prepare to follow the priests into the Jordan before the river had parted as God had promised it would. They passed that test, rightly reckoning that the symbol of God's redeeming mercy and power, namely the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth (as Joshua referred to it in vv.11,13), indicated that they were trusting and following the living God who had all authority and power to command and control all elements of creation and all men and nations of the world. Accordingly,

the covenant people began their walk well, being confident that He who had begun a good work for them would perfect and complete it as He led them safely through the watery barrier into Canaan and enabled them to defeat all of their enemies in the land where they would settle and live no longer in tents but in houses. Vital piety leads to true, abundant, and lasting profit.

Sunday, June 19th - Joshua 3: 14, 15

That the people left their tents to follow the priests to the Jordan was a good start for their walk by faith in the Word and works of God. However, their walking *to* the river was one thing; their walking *through* it would be quite another matter. The testing of the faith of both priests and people increased when the priests stepped into the river and found that its water did not initially yield to their advancing strides but covered their feet with the edges of its flooded volume. At this critical point (and at points like it in our lives) when it can seem as though prohibiting challenges will prevail over the purposes and people of God, only faith that adheres to God, though He appear intent on slaying His own people, will overcome the world's opposition (1 Jn. 5:4).

Monday, June 20th - Joshua 3: 14, 15

The fact that God's chosen priests were carrying the ark of the Lord's covenant as they stepped into the waters of the Jordan, indicated to them, to the people of Israel, and to us that God was not commanding His people to go before Him, but rather that the Lord was leading His people in a trail that He blazed by His own infallible wisdom, immeasurable love, and almighty power, and marked by His ordinances. Our God never directs us to go anywhere except where He has gone before us and where He is with us. The way of our God is a wonderful way (Josh. 3:4) that we can only know and experience when we fix our focus on Him by faith and follow Him wherever he leads.

Tuesday, June 21st - Joshua 3: 16, 17

In vv. 14,15, we read of how the priests and people of Israel set out by faith in their living God and His wondrous promise. In the final two verses of this third chapter we are given a short and simple account of the Lord's potent performance of His promise. Although the river's flooding waters initially covered the priest's feet, those faithful servants of the Lord did not retreat in fear but stood and even advanced by faith. Their faith did not cause the miraculous parting of the Jordan but it did instrumentally lead them to behold and participate in this wonder and practical provision of the Lord. However our faith may be tested, if we stand firm in it and by it, we shall always triumph through the almighty hand of our heavenly Father lovingly working for our good (Eph. 6:10,11; 1 Pet. 1:5; 5:9).

Wednesday, June 22nd - Joshua 3: 16, 17

The Lord's chosen way to have His people enter into the Promised Land, strange though it may have seemed, was highly significant. Matthew Henry well observes that *...it must be done therefore in such a way as had no precedent but the dividing of the Red Sea: and that miracle is here repeated, to show that God has the same power to finish the salvation of His people that he had to begin it.*

Thursday, June 23rd - Joshua 3: 15-17

Why did the Lord choose to have His people cross the Jordan when it was overflowing its

banks? An impossible task is made even more difficult by the timing of this crossing. However, our God often ordains that the powers arrayed against Him, His people, and His purposes for His people should take their best shot in their endeavor to frustrate the Lord and discomfit His people. Recall how the Lord told Elijah to drench the altar upon which fire from heaven was to consume the offering laid upon it (1 Ki. 18:30-39). Even when advantages are provided for the evil forces that confront the people of God, it only occasions the Lord magnifying the glory of His wisdom and power and deepens the grateful assurance of His people.

Friday, June 24th - Joshua 3: 15-17

It is significant that the priests' *approach to* the Jordan did not coincide with the division of the waters. It was their *entrance into* those waters (that had seemed initially to defy the word of God's promise) that was accompanied by the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to divide the Jordan. We do well to run the race set before us according to God's Word and by the power of faith working itself out in loving obedience to our Lord (Heb. 12:1-3). We do not, cannot, and need not know how or even precisely when the Lord will work to remove those obstacles that stand against His promises, we simply need know that His love will prompt, His wisdom will direct, and His power will always cause all things to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Saturday, June 25th - Joshua 3: 16, 17

We are given a sketch but not an exhaustive explanation of how the way was opened for Israel's crossing. We are told that the waters rose in a heap indicating that it was not a natural impediment to their flow but rather, contrary to its fluid nature, the water congealed or solidified in obedience to the word of God's power. We are also told that this miraculous provision extended beyond a narrow corridor through which the people of Israel passed and would have been themselves the only ones to witness. The city of Adam beside Zarethan was approximately fifteen miles north of the crossing point opposite of Jericho. Also, the river's waters south of the crossing point drained into the Dead Sea, leaving a dry riverbed about five miles in a season when the river usually was and had been in flood volume. Accordingly, this miracle of God's merciful power was not only used and celebrated by the people of God (Ps. 114), but it was also witnessed by many people of the land who saw how Israel's God could govern all natural elements. Perhaps some of them, as Rahab had experienced, found their hard hearts melting and going out to God in saving faith.

Sunday, June 26th - Joshua 3: 16,17

The Lord opened a way for His people contrary to the laws of natural phenomena. Our God leads us through many natural ways but He also at times makes ways for us where none before existed. The people of Israel did not hesitate to walk in this way that their living God had opened for them. They were witnesses of the Lord's wonders but also they were participants, entering into and profiting from the safe and effective access the Lord had opened for them into the Promised Land. All of the covenant people entered through this way, as v.17 makes clear by its reference to *all the nation*. The people of God profited not only by the ease with which they could cross the river and convey their possessions with them into the land. They profited by the knowledge that although they came out of the river to face Jericho, that great walled city, and had to negotiate the hardest and highest hurdle first, they would be led and held by the hand that had just parted a flooded river for them. As Matthew Henry well observes: *If Jordan's flood cannot keep them out, Canaan's force cannot turn them out.*

Monday, June 27th - Joshua 3: 15-17

Several features of the priests' actions are recorded in these verses. We are told how without questioning or hesitation they carried the ark and with it entered into the flooding waters of the Jordan. From their entrance, the priests ventured to stand in the middle of the Jordan on ground made dry from the Lord's having cut off the downward flowing waters. There the priests remained until all of the people had crossed to the west bank near Jericho. These priests and all true pastors of the Church should ever be the first into spiritually challenging but clearly necessary situations, and they should remain at their posts until they are released by God to be the last ones out of such situations. These priests serve as good examples of ones who trust the Lord, have confidence in His Word, and possess a sacrificial love for His people. They are tokens of their God who is ever the vanguard and rear guard of His people, and it is beautiful and edifying for us to read of the people's faithful following the Lord's Word and His priestly servants. Here is foreshadowed our safe passage across the Jordan of death into the celestial city through the access, prayers, and example of our sympathetic and saving high priest, Jesus.

June 2011

Tuesday, June 28th - Joshua 4: 1-3

This fourth chapter of Joshua is all about the construction of an enduring testimony to the saving power that the Lord exerted for His people. Our God performs a full work of redemption for us. He not only accomplishes what His people need for their salvation, but He also provides for them and their future generations sufficient and credible testimony so that they might not forget but ever recall for their edification His saving work accomplished for them. All of God's Word is not only teaching us doctrine but also testifying to what God has done to fulfill His great and precious promises to those who believe in Him. The Bible is not only about redemption but also about the necessity and importance of our remembering the facts about our salvation (Lk. 24:6; 2 Tim. 2:8).

Wednesday, June 29th – Joshua 4: 1-3

The things we are told to remember in God's Word are not fables but facts. Our Lord knows how frail we are and how inclined we can be to forget His marvelous works or to regard them as exaggerations. Therefore, this chapter about testimony and our edifying recollection of the divine testimony begins with a statement of the fact that the nation of Israel crossed the Jordan through the merciful and mighty provision of the Lord. Our salvation may seem to us at times too good to be true, but in fact it is too good not to be true and should never be forgotten.

Thursday, June 30th - Joshua 4: 1-3

It was by the prevailing power of God that all the nation of Israel had entered into the divided waters of the Jordan River and safely crossed to the opposite bank, which was the border of the land of Canaan. However, such a crossing was far more than a matter of the Lord exerting His almighty power. Therefore, the Lord gave instruction that His people should cross not as a crowd but rather as an orderly procession. The Lord also gave instruction that His servants should take appropriate steps to preserve the memory of this merciful and mighty provision. The crossing itself was vital provision for the generation of Israel that Joshua led into the Promised Land. The memorial to that crossing would prove to be of vital significance to all future believers. Those believers would come to know of this great and gracious work of God through

the testimony of the memorial stones as seen by many generations with their eyes and eventually by all later generations through the words recorded in Scripture. In this way, God proves to be the loving Savior of believers and their descendants.

Friday, July 1st - Joshua 4: 1-3

In the economy of our God, there are some who are blessed through their seeing and believing, as Thomas was when he beheld his resurrected Lord. But there are others—and far more of them—who are blessed through their faithful heeding the testimony of God's Word (Jn. 20:29). Our Lord loves and deals most effectively with both classes of believers, and we should regard His Word of testimony to be no less effectual in our lives than were His miraculous works effectual in the lives of those who personally experienced them.

Saturday, July 2nd - Joshua 4: 1-3

There are two marvels memorialized in Israel's crossing of the Jordan. The first is the marvel of the Lord's merciful and mighty provision for His people. The word of command spoken by His mouth was backed up by the power of His almighty hand. Such divine mercy and might displayed in this marvel are features of our Lord's dealings with all of His people in all ages, and He would have us all profit from the comfort and assurance our recalling and faithful consideration of this demonstrated fact provides for us.

Sunday, July 3rd - Joshua 4: 1-3

The other marvel memorialized in this chapter is that of the resolute and unreserved trust the people of Israel had in the Lord. That trust was demonstrated by their obedience to His Word, especially when the divine command ran counter to all natural human reasoning. God's people believed and obeyed their Lord, and their faithful obedience resulted not in their deaths but in their felicitous crossing of the Jordan and their safe arrival in the Promised Land. The Lord would have His people in all ages to profit from their faithful consideration of this sweet fruit that issues whenever believers in any age and any circumstances trust in and obey their Lord with all their hearts (Prov. 3:5,6).

Monday, July 4th - Joshua 4: 1-3

God does not memorialize a myth. It is only after the miraculous parting and the faithful crossing of the Jordan were accomplished that God gave to Joshua instructions to erect a memorial to these blessed events. What God had begun 40 years previously, leading His people out of their bondage in Egypt, He here completes, leading them all safely into the Promised Land. None of His chosen people were lost in their crossing through the miraculous opening God made in the Jordan. Strong and weak, men, women, and children all arrived in the land that God had promised them for their blessing and for His glory. The work that His goodness begins, the arm of His strength always completes.

Tuesday, July 5th - Joshua 4: 1-3

The specific instructions that the Lord gave to Joshua for the construction of the memorial are detailed and highly significant. The Lord begins by telling Joshua to select twelve men, one from each tribe. This communication had been given to Joshua prior to the nation's crossing of the river (Josh. 3:12), and the selection presumably had been made at that time. Now, after the crossing had been accomplished, the Lord's purpose for this selection is revealed. The twelve

men clearly represent each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The chosen men are tokens of the entire chosen nation, signifying that by the trust and obedience of the living stones of the Church of God, the people of Israel serve to glorify the name of the Lord their Savior. The parting of the Jordan was not so much a commemoration of a performance of God's omnipotence as it was a memorial to the power of the Lord having been wielded lovingly for the saving of His people, the living trophies of His glorious grace.

Wednesday, July 6th - Joshua 4: 1-3

The twelve men representing the whole nation of Israel are instructed each to take a stone from the miraculously dried riverbed and deposit them on the Canaan side of the Jordan. These stones were trophies carried by men who were themselves living stones and trophies of God's grace and power—men who represented all of the living stones of the household of God (1 Pet. 2:4-10). The trophies were carried out of the place that, apart from the merciful might of their God, could have been their watery grave. Accordingly, these stones served as enduring tokens that the Lord saves His people from death and makes them to be more than conquerors over all things through life and death (Rom. 8:35-39).

Thursday, July 7th - Joshua 4: 1-3

The stones removed from the dried bed of the Jordan were not rare jewels or beautiful gems. They were common stones, remarkable only because they had been retrieved from a place that would have barred Israel from entrance to the Promised Land had God not miraculously opened a way for them through that watery barrier. Because those stones had been lifted from such a place by these men of Israel, no stones, no gems, no jewels on earth could have been more precious in all that they signified to the people of God about their saving Lord and about the blessing He had showered and would ever shower upon them.

Friday, July 8th - Joshua 4: 1-3

The stones were to be set down in the place where Israel would lodge for a time. A memorial would be erected from those stones at the place where the covenant people would spend their first night in the Promised Land. This memorial would serve not only as an enduring testimony to the mercy and saving power of the Lord, but also as a pledge of Israel's ownership of all the land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:13-21), and that God had now restored to His people by the demonstration of His almighty power and sovereign authority. The God whose will the river obeyed because He was sovereign over it, here pledges that He will see to it that Canaan's inhabitants would melt before His people and yield the land to its rightful owners.

Saturday, July 9th - Joshua 4: 4-7

These verses tell us how Joshua, having received his instructions from the Lord, conveyed the divine directives to the chosen twelve. Accordingly, the plans and purposes of God for His glory and for the good of His people progress toward their fulfillment. Our God is not the God of plans and promises only. He is supremely the God of saving accomplishment. Stones would soon be selected and erected in the chosen place where they would cry out to the glory of God and for the good of His people. Even at this point, the obedience of Joshua and the twelve representatives of Israel shows us the living stones of God's household, by their faithful

obedience to their Lord in a mundane but highly significant matter, living and serving to glorify and enjoy their gracious God.

Sunday, July 10th - Joshua 4: 4-7

The sight of the memorial stones would bear testimony to all who had eyes to see and illuminated minds to understand their significance. Yet, God makes provision not only for the spiritually astute but also for those of His children whose apprehension of the memorial and its significance would have been weak, either by reason of their own mental limitations or by reason of their distance from this event through time's passage. Therefore, Joshua adds the verbal teaching from the living stones of Israel to the mute testimony of the stones taken from the Jordan. To what children may partly apprehend as a curiosity, people of understanding and experience are hereby directed to add the truth they know and treasure about their God and His works so that all of the covenant people might grow together in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (Col. 1:24-29).

Monday, July 11th - Joshua 4: 8

With this verse we are brought to the record of the accomplishment of the Lord's instructions to Joshua and through Joshua to His people. The people of God here work out their salvation according to the words of the God who has done great things for them and in them. This obedience of the faithful manifests something distinct but not separate from the testimony of the memorial stones. Here we behold the marvel of the trusting faith and diligent obedience of the living stones of God's household. God has not only done a work in the river Jordan, He has also done a wonderful work in the hearts of His redeemed people. The testimony of the Jordan's stones endured for a time, but the loving devotion and grateful obedience of the people of God serve to erect a memorial to the gracious love and saving power of the Lord that endures through time and eternity.

Tuesday, July 12th - Joshua 4: 9

This verse briefly describes how Joshua erected a stone monument in the middle of the Jordan. This was a monument in addition to the one that was erected on the Canaan bank of the Jordan. Some question whether Joshua was in this work going beyond the Word of God, since there is no mention in Scripture of the Lord instructing him to raise up this second memorial. But as Joshua has shown himself to be scrupulously careful to do all, and only all, of what God had spoken to him, and as Scripture nowhere condemns Joshua but rather commends him for all he did in his leading of Israel (Josh. 4:14), we may reasonably assume that Joshua here completes a confirmed testimony composed of the witness of two piles of stone, one in the Jordan mirroring the one made from stones out of the Jordan and raised up on the river's bank. The waters of Jordan can be rightly seen as a barrier of separation between believers and their blessed reward. The way of God for His people lay through those waters that without His saving power would have encompassed them in death. Therefore, these two memorials testify to us that our God saves us *in* death (the people entered safely into the Jordan) and *through* death (they emerged to live permanently on Canaan's side).

Wednesday, July 13th - Joshua 4: 10, 11

The opening word, *for*, in v.10 indicates to us that although the Lord was the ultimate source for the miraculous parting of the Jordan, He blessed the means of His grace with instrumental

power. God wrought His power through the men and religious features, such as the ark, of His choosing and instituting. As long as the priests and ark of the Lord remained in the Jordan, the barrier to the Promised Land was held open and the power of death was held back from the children of Israel. This arrangement foreshadows the blessed truth that because Jesus, our great high priest, has entered and passed through death, He has rendered that dreadful last enemy to be now the portal through which we enter safely and joyfully into the glory of heaven (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16).

Thursday, July 14th - Joshua 4: 10, 11

The priests stood their ground firmly in the dry passage that God had opened before them. While the priests stood there, the waters were held back and the people were safe. Yet, we do not read that the people flocked around and stayed with the priests. Instead, we read that they hastened to cross because they rejoiced to obey the Lord's will that they should dwell securely in the Promised Land and not tarry in the miraculous way God had opened for them to enter that land. Likewise, although it is gain for us to live on in this world by Christ's grace and for His glory, for us to die and enter into the eternal joy of the glorious kingdom of our Redeemer is greatest gain. That is why the Spirit and the bride of Christ ask Him to come quickly and usher in the consummation of our salvation (Rev. 22: 17,20).

Friday, July 15th - Joshua 4: 10, 11

The people did not presume on the Lord's miraculous provision but hastened through the Jordan to the place promised to them and appointed for them by God. All of the people safely crossed. Some hastened, no doubt, due to their weak faith and wavering trust that God could hold back the waters for as long as they needed Him to do so. Some hastened in strong faith to make the crossing and be where God had called them to be. Not one hesitated; not one refused to cross. Not one that our heavenly Joshua calls to Himself for salvation will ever be lost (Jn. 10:11,27-29).

Saturday, July 16th - Joshua 4: 10, 11

Not only the position of the priests in the Jordan is noted in these verses, but also the timing and positioning of their movement out of the Jordan is observed. The priests and the ark of the Lord had been first into the Jordan. They remained in the middle of the riverbed until all the covenant nation had crossed into Canaan. Then they left their position and came out of the Jordan, passed by the gathered people of Israel and took up once more the lead position. In this way the people of God were shown the comforting truth that the Lord their God was with them and surrounded them in all their walk by faith. When our Savior says that He will never leave or forsake us, He means that He and His blessing go before us, stand guard behind us, and abide with us in all circumstances.

Sunday, July 17th - Joshua 4: 12, 13

Special notice is taken of the performance of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. We are told how they faithfully kept their promise. They who had already received their inheritance of territories east of the Jordan and had settled their families there (Josh. 1:12-18) not only crossed over with the rest of Israel, but they led their brethren to face their fighting responsibilities clad in their battle armor and carrying their weapons. Those first blessed by the

Lord should be first to show their gratitude through their diligent and even dangerous and sacrificial service for the glory of their Lord and for the good of their brethren (Phil. 2:1-4).

Monday, July 18th - Joshua 4: 14

On the day when Israel completed her miraculous, orderly, and highly significant crossing of the Jordan, the Lord raised up His servant Joshua in the estimation of all members of the covenant nation. In the exaltation of His servant, God was keeping His promise to Joshua (Josh. 3:7) and showering His good blessing upon His people. Through this man of proven fidelity to God and humble compassion for the people of God, Israel was guided, protected, and provided for by a servant who was like his heavenly Master, whose infallible wisdom, holy love, enlightening truth, and almighty power caused all things to work together for their good.

Tuesday, July 19th - Joshua 4: 4: 14

The Lord exalted Joshua not by His conferring upon His servant empty honors but rather by His infusing within him quickening, strengthening, and edifying grace. It was therefore not by divine order but by the people's grateful observation of the competent and compassionate leadership of the Lord's servant that they held Joshua in highest esteem and gave to him greatest respect. In this they did not idolize him, giving to him that worship that belongs to God alone, but rather they saw his light so shining that they gave glory to the God who had exalted Joshua for their highest blessing. Joshua had honored and exalted God by his faithful obedience, and those who honor God will always be honored by God. Our highest place will always be found when we lie low at the feet of our divine Redeemer who stooped to serve us and to lift us from our guilty bondage to the heights of His glorious kingdom.

Wednesday, July 20th - Joshua 4: 15-18

These verses give us a flashback in order to make clear to us that the priests' marching orders into and out of the Jordan came from the Lord through Joshua rather than from Joshua himself. By the ordaining of God, the priests were to be the first into and the last out of the place that would have been a watery tomb to them apart from the preserving power of the Lord. The priests were not prompted to leave their stand in the middle of the Jordan by their own reasoning, they judging that when their eyes saw the last of the Israelites safely across the Jordan their job was finished. Instead they waited for the word of command from God through Joshua before they joined their brethren on the Canaan bank of the river. So our Jesus is the supremely faithful high priest who did all things necessary for our salvation not according to His own initiative but according to the will and authority of His Father (Jn. 5:30).

Thursday, July 21st - Joshua 4: 15-18

The sovereign hand of the Lord is seen in every feature of this redemptive drama. The waters of the Jordan do not return to their normal course according to the natural forces that usually governed them. It was only when the feet of Israel's priests stood on the bank of the Promised Land that the river's waters returned to their flood-stage fullness from their state of divided suspension. The hand of the Lord was the ultimate cause of the dividing of these waters, but the feet of His priests were the instrumental cause. The Lord still makes His ordinances (the ark then, His Word now) and His servants (priests then, pastors now) to be instrumental in providing His people with holy comforts, strong security, and effectual access to His blessings great and small.

Friday, July 22nd - Joshua 4: 19

In this verse we have a note of the date on which Israel first camped in the Promised Land. The date was the 40th anniversary of the Passover they had observed on the eve of their departure from Egypt (Ex. 12:2,3). Within days they would observe their first Passover in the Promised Land (Josh. 5:10). The intervening forty years were filled with times of their initial departure from Egypt, a long period of discipline due to the people's refusal to enter the land at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 13,14), and approximately a year of their tune-up fighting minor kings prior to Israel's entrance into Canaan. In all of this, the Lord had shown Himself to be the alpha and omega of His people's salvation, the beginning and end of their redemption, and the One who used even the dark providence of His discipline to train up one of the most faithful, godly, obedient, and fruitful generations that have ever adorned the Church of God. What our Lord has begun for and in us, He will always bring to perfect completion in His perfect time.

Sunday, July 23rd - Joshua 4: 20-24

These verses tell of how God, through His servant Joshua, made provision to teach future generations by means of tokens of these current demonstrations of divine mercy and might. God does not miraculously part rivers every day, but He has ordained that the testimony of such redemptive feats should be recorded for our instruction and comfort. Such memorials instruct and assure us that for the God who did the parting then, nothing is impossible for Him to accomplish now for our good.

Sunday, July 24th - Joshua 4: 20-24

Joshua set the memorial stones in order at Gilgal. The stones were not heaped up but placed with obvious arrangement that would have indicated intelligent design. Yet, Joshua knew that while the stones, like the burning bush, would draw the attention of people, they would not have effectively communicated their full testimony to any future generations. Therefore, he anticipates the Israelites' children asking questions from curiosity but receiving answers that are critical and comforting to them and to all believers. The answer is dictated by Joshua to his contemporaries, indicating that the Lord and His faithful spokesmen are necessary and edifying interpreters of divine providence. Human speculation would never imagine the truth that divine testimony reveals.

Monday, July 25th - Joshua 4: 20-24

The stones would testify of something remarkable that had occurred in the river from whence they had been taken. Only the testimony of God's people would reveal the truth of how those stones had come to be where they were and arranged as they were. The truth is that Israel had trod across the Jordan in a miraculous way that enabled them to gather materials and erect a monument to the glory of God who had graciously and powerfully enabled His people to enter into the Promised Land. When people detect the fruit of the Spirit issuing from our hearts that had been dead in a sea of sin, they, too, may inquire regarding the monument of divine grace in our lives, and when they do so inquire, we should be ready to give an account for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3:15).

Tuesday, July 26th - Joshua 4: 20-24

Joshua links together the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea with their crossing of the Jordan to remind the covenant people that what God begins He brings to completion, and that His merciful

might by which He began and completed His people's pilgrimage to the Promised Land had been operative in less spectacular ways throughout their entire pilgrimage. His power does not fail, though His people may die and be succeeded by their children. His mercies endure, though His people wander from Him. His purposes prevail from generation to generation.

Wednesday, July 27th - Joshua 4: 20-24

The testimony of the twelve river stones, augmented by the testimony of the people of God, was to be to the Church and through the Church to the world. That testimony is to the marvel of God's mercy and might exercised for His people. The Lord divides bodies of water, draws water from rocks, turns bitter waters sweet, turns water into wine, walks on water and enables His people to do so. All of these miracles are tokens that show the Church and the world that the Lord is sovereign over all of creation. The Lord's inclusion of the actions of His people, in their crossing the Jordan, gathering the stones, and erecting them at Gilgal, testifies to the marvel of the faith they have in the Lord, whereby they serve by the direction of His Word and the empowering of His Spirit and for the sake His glory. As believers reckon God to be mercifully and mightily for them in whatever age or circumstance in which they live, their fears are vanquished and they are emboldened to do feats of faith, walking where no unbeliever ever would dare attempt to walk, and doing things for the glory of God and for the good of all men, especially those of the household of faith. By such service they raise up a monument to the marvel that God loves sinners so much that He has come Himself as our great high priest to take is stand in our place and the flood of death's waves so that we might pass safely through this life and through death to our eternal home with Him in glory.

July 2011

Thursday, July 28th - Joshua 5: 1-5

As this fifth chapter of Joshua opens, we see again how the Lord's people rightly concern themselves with God before they concern themselves with men. Previously, we were shown how the consecration of the people of Israel took priority over their crossing of the Jordan (compare Josh. 3:5 with Josh. 4:1). Now that God's people are safely in the Promised Land, the Lord directs them to concern themselves with the need most of the males have to be circumcised, and afterward to concern themselves with their conquest of the Canaanites. This priority of our focus being on the Lord and His kingdom and then on the people and circumstances of our lives is one that carries through to us today (Mt. 6:33).

Friday, July 29th – Joshua 5: 1

This opening verse gives us significant insight into the emotional impact the Israelites' crossing of the Jordan had upon their enemies in the Promised Land. We are informed that *all* the kings of the Amorites and *all* the kings of the Canaanites were filled with dread and depression, if not despair, when they realized that Israel had made their miraculous crossing into Canaan. The Amorites, for the most part, dwelt on the east side of the Jordan. However, some of them had established themselves in the mountains of Canaan on the west side of the river, and, being in the Promised Land proper, they knew they were in the path of Israel's coming conquest. These Amorites had gained their lands by conquest and held them by warfare. They would be the most difficult for Israel to conquer. However, even they knew that they would be facing no ordinary soldiers in the army of Israel. The Canaanites lived along the coastal plain of the Mediterranean

Sea. They lived by trade and commerce and would prove less formidable for Israel to conquer. The entire leadership of Canaan, from strongest to weakest, was reeling from fear, if not from actual defeat, before they even met a single Israelite soldier in battle. The enemies of the Lord's people always dread those trusting in and obeying their saving God. We should be comforted knowing that in Christ we are more than conquerors over all of our foes.

Saturday, July 30th - Joshua 5: 1

We are told that the dismay of these kings resulted from their having heard of Israel's crossing of the Jordan. The sinful kings (and they were full of iniquity, cf. Gen. 15:16-21) did not need to see Israel's crossing or experience it themselves to believe it happened and to be deeply affected by it. The simple testimony of the stupendous truth was powerful enough to reduce those proud rulers to fearful men who were keenly aware of their impotence. The word of our testimony of what God has done in Christ more powerfully affects sinful men and devils than we may realize.

Sunday, July 31st - Joshua 5: 1

We are told with precision what had reduced these kings into cringing cowards. Their cowardice issued from a three-fold cause. The first cause was the miraculous parting of the Jordan. From this observation we learn that all men, even those in high positions, are awed by undeniable works of divine power. It is only due to the Lord's patience that the wicked are not every moment terrified by the manifested might of God. Such divine patience is designed to lead men to repentance (Rom. 2:4), not to indulge them in their sin. All who abuse God's patience and refuse to repent will on the final day witness in profound terror not the dividing of a river on earth but the rending of the heavens and the revelation of the wrathful Lamb of God whom they have spurned (Rev. 6:12-17).

Monday, August 1st - Joshua 5: 1

The second thing that reduced the ruling enemies of Israel to impotent cowardice was their realization that the awesome deed of dividing the Jordan had been performed by the hand of the Lord, the God of Israel. Here the kings experienced a profound subduing as they glimpsed the Lord's legitimate, sovereign, and absolute authority governing the working of His almighty power. Sinful men dread facing the holy Judge and glorious King of heaven and earth.

Tuesday, August 2nd - Joshua 5: 1

The third cause of the fear of the kings in Canaan was that the God of supreme authority and almighty power had overruled the course of nature for the sake of the sons of Israel. Accordingly, they dreaded not only the Lord but also the people whom the Lord had redeemed by His covenant love and for whom He had wrought this great miracle. Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High God abide in the shadow of an almighty hand (Ps. 91:1). Worldly people sense their impotence and vulnerability when they encounter a people so well protected.

Wednesday, August 3rd - Joshua 5: 1

Forty years prior to this time, it was the sons of Israel (excepting Joshua, Caleb, and Moses) who regarded the inhabitants of Canaan as giants while considering themselves as grasshoppers (Num. 13:32,33). Now the almighty hand of God, having moved to open a miraculous way into Canaan for His people, had exalted the sons of Israel as the majestic ones of the earth (Ps. 16:3), and had

reduced the inhabitants of Canaan to a fearful prostration. When the great God of heaven stoops to serve in gracious humility and effectual power the people of His sovereign election, even the wicked are compelled to acknowledge that God exalts His people to be more than conquerors.

Thursday, August 4th - Joshua 5: 1

We are told that the hearts of these kings melted. They would yet seek to put on brave faces (Josh. 10:1-5), but it is the heart out of which flow the issues of life. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. A man is not how he projects himself outwardly to be. Yet, although these kings' hearts melted, they did not soften toward the Lord. Had they been more like the Canaanite woman, who humbled herself before Jesus (Mt. 15:27), they would have rejoiced in the blessing of the love of the Lord instead of being paralyzed in dread of Him and of His people.

Friday, August 5th - Joshua 5: 1

The Lord treated His people gently when He eased their entrance into Canaan by His having divided the Jordan's waters for them. That gentle treatment made the sons of Israel great in the eyes of Canaan's kings (Ps. 18:35). The Lord also treated the kings of the land with a remarkable degree of gentleness. Instead of God rending heaven and coming Himself in His holy wrath and judging glory against these kings, He divided a river and directed His people to enter the land where these kings dwelt. Had the kings followed Rahab's course, they would have regarded the divided Jordan as an open invitation for them to surrender to the God of grace and to be incorporated into the commonwealth of the Lord's salvation. It reveals the sinfulness of sin that these kings, knowing they could not stand against this God or His people, refused to bow before Him and to be taken by Him lovingly into His redeemed family.

Saturday, August 6th - Joshua 5: 1, 2

For the people of God, piety should always come before practical endeavors. Accordingly, the Lord directs Joshua to apply circumcision to the sons of Israel before they venture to conquer their enemies. This divine directive may seem untimely and impractical. The people of Israel were in the face of their enemies and God was ordering the men to weaken themselves physically by their submitting to a rite that would make them painfully tender for several days. Yet, the God who had parted the Jordan knew best when His people should cut their foreskins. As it occurs here, the timing was perfect. For while the Israelites were rendered physically weak by their own hands in hearty obedience to God, their enemies were rendered weak in heart by the hand of God having cut the waters of the river for the sake of His people. However foolish and ineffectual may appear the ways and will of our God, His deeds, timing, and ways are perfect. It is our highest wisdom and greatest security to trust in Him with all our hearts and to cut out of our lives all carnal self-reliance (Prov. 3:5,6).

Sunday, August 7th - Joshua 5: 2

Several questions arise in response to the Lord's directions in this verse. What makes circumcision so important that it is here required by God, even as His people are set in the face of their enemies? Why, if circumcision is so vital, had it not been performed in Israel until this point of time? The answer to the second question is given in vv.4-7. The answer to the first question is found in Gen. 17:1-14, where the Lord gave to Abraham circumcision as the sign of His gracious and saving covenant with His people. While we are actually saved by Christ, the substance of our redemption, we do well to respect most highly the signs and even the shadows

of Christ's saving work. Furthermore, circumcision is one of the two Old Testament Sacraments that not only foreshadow Christ's saving work but also convey to those rightly partaking of those Sacraments edifying measures of the actual saving grace of the Lord. For believers, vital applications of Christ's saving work are always more important to them than is their warring against their enemies.

Monday, August 8th - Joshua 5: 3

The Lord speaks and Joshua obeys. The servant of the Lord is not mindlessly obedient, but rather he by faith has come to believe and to know with growing and deepening conviction that the highest good of the Lord's people is always served when they trust and obey their God in all things, however painful and perplexing some of the things He commands may at first appear to be. Many are our regrets when we hesitate and fail to follow our Good Shepherd fully. Those who do follow Him fully have no regrets but only testify to their having ceaseless cause to praise their wise and loving Lord.

Tuesday, August 9th - Joshua 5: 4-7

The Spiritual importance of circumcision lay in its significance. It was the sign and seal of God's salvation of His people. This made the application of the rite of circumcision to be of critical importance. The reason why circumcision had to be applied at this time had to do with the fact that it had been suspended in its application for the forty years of Israel's wilderness sojourning. The perplexing and practical objections to the rite being performed at this point in Israel's history would have been by far overshadowed by the wonderful resuming of such a vital sacrament that had been long suspended. The timing of the Lord's giving is always perfect.

Wednesday, August 10th - Joshua 5: 4-7

These verses explain to us what made necessary the circumcision of the men of Israel, all of whom should have been in a regular course of events, circumcised on the eighth day after their birth (Gen. 17:12). We learn in these verses that the whole generation of those sons of Israel born in the course of the nation's wilderness wandering had not been circumcised. It was not because it would have been inconvenient for the Israelites to perform circumcision on their infant sons in the wilderness. The people had been regular in their application of circumcision throughout the years of their slavery in Egypt. It was rather a matter of the Lord suspending His people from the sacrament due to their sin. We are reminded in v.6 that Israel did not heed the voice of the Lord. Accordingly, God sentenced the heedless adults to death and their children to disciplinary suspension from the sacrament. If we do not heed God's Word neither we nor our children can be helped by His Sacraments.

Thursday, August 11th - Joshua 5: 4-7

The people of Israel heard God speaking faithfully to them through Moses, yet they repeatedly failed to trust the Lord, to believe His Word, to rely on His provision, and to obey His directives. Their failure to believe God over matters of what He did or did not provide with respect to water and food hardened into a stubborn refusal of the Israelites to trust and obey the Lord at Kadesh-barnea forty years prior to this time (Num. 13). At that critical point, the covenant people determined to make idols of their fears and to reject entirely their God. Therefore, the Lord sentenced them to die in the wilderness, and, although He graciously continued to supply them with manna, He suspended them from His Sacraments of Passover and

circumcision until such time as they should walk in repentance from their self-reliance and obey Him accordingly (Num. 14:26-35). That time of repentance had come with the rising generation that had learned to hunger and thirst for the Lord and His provision, rather than to despise it as their parents had done. Without faith we regard divine treasures as trash; with faith we regard divine crumbs as feasts, and divine discipline as blessing.

Friday, August 12th - Joshua 5: 4-7

We are not told explicitly in any book of the Pentateuch that the Lord suspended His people from partaking of His Sacraments while they were in the wilderness. We are told that the faithless parents would die in the wilderness and their children would suffer because of their parents' unfaithfulness (Num. 14:33). We are also told that the Israelites would know God's opposition for forty years, according to the forty days their spies had surveyed the Promised Land and the majority of them saw overwhelming curse in it (Num. 14:34). Implicit in these divine declarations is the Lord's suspending of His people from His Sacraments. As harsh as that may have seemed, it was a mercy to them, for it prohibited them from partaking of greater judgment as they would have been partaking of the Sacraments unworthily and so have brought judgment, not blessing, upon themselves. Our God always tempers His judgments with mercy and applies His discipline to His people with love and for their good.

Saturday, August 13th - Joshua 5: 4-7

The fact that Moses allowed the administration of the Sacraments to cease throughout Israel's forty-year wilderness sojourn, indicates clearly how well he understood the implications of God's temporal punishment of His people. Moses had almost been killed by God when, earlier in his life, he had neglected to circumcise his own son (Ex. 4:24,25). Accordingly, Moses would hardly have neglected to have the sons of Israel circumcised, who had been born over a course of forty years, unless he had been certain that the Lord had suspended His people from the Sacraments. One's personal neglect of the Sacraments is serious but can be stopped at any time. The authoritative suspension of a person or people from the Sacraments is far more serious and can end only when God clearly indicates that the suspension should end.

Sunday, August 14th - Joshua 5: 4-7

The faithless refusal of the Israelites at Kadesh-barnea drove God to refuse them entrance into the Promised Land and to deprive them and their children of the signs and seals of His covenant of saving grace. The faith of the children of that faithless generation was shown in their obedient following of the Lord whom they trusted vitally. The faith of the new generation was blessed when that generation easily entered into the Promised Land and experienced not the opposition but rather the goodness, wisdom, love, and power of the Lord. To such faithful ones the Lord restored the signs and seals of His salvation, so that by His sacramental helps those who had trusted Him in the little matter of providing them with a land, would be encouraged to trust Him in the greater matter of His giving them an eternal home with Him in heaven (Num. 14:31).

Monday, August 15th - Joshua 5: 8

This verse provides a tender and significant touch to the matter of the circumcision of all the males of Israel. They remained in their camp and each male remained in his own place in the camp until all of them had healed. The Lord did not order them to ignore their pain and to go

immediately to battle with their enemies. Our God is considerate of all wounding and weakness we incur when we walk in faithful obedience to Him.

Tuesday, August 16th - Joshua 5: 9

In this verse, the Lord makes a declaration of great significance. God declares that He had rolled away the reproach of Egypt from His people. The timing of the Lord having done this helps us understand what is meant by this declaration. The day mentioned by the Lord was after the people of Israel had entered the Promised Land by the power of God and after they had received in the flesh of their males the divine sign and seal of the new nature His people possess through His redeeming salvation applied to them. In other words, the Lord by His word of promise, deeds of power, and seal of salvation had proven Himself to be the loving Savior of His people whom He had liberated from their bondage and degraded slavery in Egypt and brought into the land He had promised to them.

Wednesday, August 17th - Joshua 5: 9

The reproach of Egypt of which the Lord had relieved His people was not only the vaunting oppression of the Egyptians who had reduced the Israelites to shameful slavery. From what Moses had said in his intercessory prayer to God, when he asked the Lord not to blot out His continually sinning people lest the Egyptians mock God as having been unable to save His people (Dt. 9:28), we perceive that the Egyptians were inclined to reproach God as well as His people. The world has always and ever will make the worst of the God of salvation and of those whom He saves (Ps. 2:1-3). By His plans, promises, and provision for His people, the Lord laughs to scorn all who would reproach Him or His people.

Thursday, August 18th - Joshua 5: 9

The Lord uses the figure of His moving a heavy load off of the backs of His people when He declared to them that He had rolled away the reproach of the Egyptians. The image indicates how great and crushing the burden was that God had removed from His people. It had not been a trivial speck flicked away, but rather a considerable and crushing weight rolled away by the exertions of Almighty God. Well did the Israelites call the place where they received this divine declaration *Gilgal*, a word taken from the Hebrew verb, *to roll*. Those yoked to the Lord find His yoke to bring them ease, and His burden pleasant because it is His commitment to make their burdens light (Mt. 11:28-30).

Friday, August 19th - Joshua 5: 10

The implication of this notice of the Israelites observing the Passover is that it, too, had been suspended while the Lord's people were in the wilderness. Now the Lord has graciously restored His people to both of His Sacraments. The sons of Israel bore once again the sign of God's covenant of grace as the mark of their initiation into the company of those who belong to the Lord. They also partook again of the Passover, which was the Sacrament of sustaining for the people of God, indicating to them that they lived and were nourished by the death of the Lamb of God who takes away their sin. Those who walk by faith in the Lord find manifold, abundant, and potent provision from the God of their salvation. The parents of this blessed generation of faithful Israelites were deprived of this full provision due to their having walked by carnal sight and craven fears.

Saturday, August 20th - Joshua 5: 10, 11

Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount that if we seek first the Lord and His kingdom and righteousness, He will add all necessities to us (Mt. 6:33). Here we see that to be the case. When the people sought first to partake of the means of God's grace, then the Lord provided for them their daily bread for the first time from the produce of the Promised Land. Far from the land devouring them, as their parents had feared (Num. 13:32), it nourished and sustained them from the time of their entrance into it.

Sunday, August 21st - Joshua 5: 12

When the permanent and ordinary provision of the Promised Land began to nourish the people of Israel, the manna that God had miraculously supplied for forty years to sustain His people ceased. God always provides for His people. He does so miraculously if necessary and for as long as necessary; but He is also the One who gives us our daily bread in ordinary ways as Jesus teaches us to ask it from Him. The Word of God is our spiritual manna that our Lord will supply to us throughout our pilgrimage here, but when we reach the celestial city, we shall not feed on the Word by faith but we shall be nourished by the sight of our Redeemer's face (Rev. 21:22-22:5).

Monday, August 22nd - Joshua 5: 13-15

In v.13, we find Joshua at last turning his attention from his worship of God to his working for God. Scripture has made clear to us thus far how the Lord has led His people to place concerns of piety before practical matters. Yet, those who practice true piety in due course set their minds and hands to engage in practical and necessary matters. Those most heavenly-minded are never of least but are always of most earthly good. However, as we see in these verses, the godly man does not go about his worldly affairs without his being conscious of and dependent upon his God. Therefore, we find that even when Joshua turns his attention to Jericho, he does not do so without having his eyes opened to the fact that he is contemplating his challenge in the company of Jehovah, who is with him and for him so that no one or nothing can stand against him.

Tuesday, August 23rd - Joshua 5: 13

In v.13, we read of Joshua being *by* Jericho. That preposition could also read *in* Jericho, indicating that the Lord's servant was in mind and heart, if not yet in body, focusing on the first object of conquest that had been assigned to him by his Lord. Joshua focused on Jericho by faith, visualizing his triumph over and possession of that great city. We do well to reckon that in Christ we can do all that our God directs us to do.

Wednesday, August 24th - Joshua 5: 13

While the mind of the man of God was in Jericho, the God of this man draws near to help him. The approach of God draws the attention of Joshua. Yet all he sees is a man holding a drawn sword. The Lord appearing as such a martial figure was in keeping with the contested battle about to take place against Jericho. Yet the vision was not so specific as to make it clear to Joshua that he was seeing the Lord appear as his helper. Therefore, Joshua boldly asks this man whether he was a helping friend or an advanced enemy. The nearness of our God may at times appear to us to be questionable as to whether we are facing a good or bad development in our

plans, hopes, and lives. We always do well to clarify the matter, for even if we find ourselves standing against an enemy, we can withstand such enemies when we don the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff).

Thursday, August 25th - Joshua 5: 13, 14

The significance of what Joshua saw with his eyes was unclear to him. The human guise was misleading because Joshua would likely have expected a manifestation of God or one of His angels to be more glorious than was the sight of this sword-bearing man. It was not until Joshua asked for clarification that he with immediate clarity and profound impact understood that he was facing his God in the likeness of human flesh, his sovereign Lord as a servant who came to work for the triumph of His people, and the King of the Church militant. In a moment, and in answer to his bold challenge to this mysterious figure, Joshua came to see that the Lord was nearer to him and to the people of Israel than he had imagined. The Lord makes this clear to His servants through His Word, even more than through how He appears to us. With the declaration that He had come to Israel as captain of the host of the Lord, Joshua knew that the man's sword was wielded by an almighty hand for him and for the sons of Israel, and that through such wielding they would be more than conquerors.

Friday, August 26th - Joshua 5: 13, 14

In Joshua 1:5, the Lord promises to be unfailingly with Joshua just as He had been with Moses. When Moses came to Horeb, he was encountered and commissioned by God to accomplish the release of His people from Egypt. There God appeared to Moses in a burning bush, and when Moses asked for God's name, the Lord revealed Himself as *I am*, the self-existing and self-sufficient God upon whose authority, power, wisdom, and love Moses and the people he was to lead could depend for their liberty from their enslaving oppressors. Now God was appearing to Joshua, the man of His choosing to lead His people into the Promised Land, as Moses had been God's man to lead His people out of the land of their slavery. According to His people's needs, so the Lord appears to them, whether as the almighty One to break their bondage, or as the martial Leader to enable them to prevail over all foes and forces that try to prevent their entering into the fullness of the Lord's blessing for them.

Saturday, August 27th - Joshua 5: 14, 15

Joshua responded rightly to the Lord's self-disclosure of His person and prevailing purpose. The leader of Israel bows in worship to his Lord, asking only that his God reveal His will to him so that he might do it. The Lord accepts the worship of His servant and reveals His will further to Joshua as the man of God had asked. What the Lord said to His servant was not that he should launch his attack upon Jericho, but rather that he should remain with Him in holy communion and acceptable worship. Far from Joshua protesting that practical necessities would prevent his obedience to this divine directive, the man of God humbled himself and found highest satisfaction in his continued worship of the Lord. Nothing in heaven or earth fits a man better for his work on earth than such vital worship of the King of heaven and Lord of saving grace and power.

August 2011

Sunday, August 28th - Joshua 6: 1, 2

The Apostle Paul tells believers to pray and to rejoice at all times (1 Thess. 5:16,17). These

opening verses of this sixth chapter of Joshua inform us how and why we are to do these things constantly. We saw in the closing verses of the fifth chapter how the Lord came to Joshua as that chosen leader of Israel was pondering the practical challenge of his leading the sons of Israel against Jericho. The Lord kept Joshua's mind fixed first on his worship of God, even as he contemplated and sought to accomplish his work for God. When Joshua made it his business to worship the Lord, the Lord made it His business to direct, encourage, and empower Joshua to work with efficient and fruitful effect. Those who determine to fix their minds on heavenly things—and especially on heaven's King—will continually prove to be of most earthly good (Col. 3:1-4, 15-17).

Monday, August 29th – Joshua 6: 1, 2

The first thing the Lord gave Joshua as a fruit of his worship was an accurate perception of the challenge before him. Not only were the walls of Jericho thick and high, but they also were securely shut against the Israelites. How was Joshua going to lead this mass of wilderness wanderers who were inexperienced at war against such a sealed fortified city? The Lord leads Joshua to perceive that the task before him was not merely difficult but was impossible. Faith does not ignore or diminish our challenges. David was not ignorant of the size and armaments of Goliath (1 Sam. 17:4-7, 45), nor was Abraham in denial over the deadness of his aged body and of Sarah's womb (Rom. 4:19). Our Lord informs us of the real magnitude of our problems so that we would not try to rely on our own frailty but rather on His almighty power as the solution to our problems.

Tuesday, August 30th - Joshua 6: 1, 2

These verses show us how the Lord gives His people a true perception of their challenges so that they would hunger and thirst for the provision that His almighty arm alone can make. After Joshua saw the strongly secured city of Jericho, the Lord directed him to see something beyond the perception of his eyes. Joshua is directed to consider His God who holds Jericho in His almighty hand. When Joshua turns to regard the One speaking to him, he beholds the great *I am* of Israel, the self-existent and self-sufficient God who needs nothing but who graciously gives to His people all things (Rom. 8:32). Such faithful focus on the person and work of the Lord leads Joshua to a profound, precious, detailed, and practical grasp of the strength and security he has in the Lord that are infinitely greater than what the citizens of Jericho had in their city.

Wednesday, August 31st - Joshua 6: 1, 2

The Lord promises to give Jericho into Joshua's hand. God does not say that He *will* give the city to His servant, but rather that He *has given* Jericho to him. Whenever our God speaks, the matter is as good as done. No sane soul would doubt that he possessed an item he felt and held in his hand. Neither does the Lord leave any room for His servants to doubt the truth and comforting certainty of His great and precious promises and provision.

Thursday, September 1st - Joshua 6: 1, 2

The Lord does not simply promise Joshua that Israel would conquer Jericho, but rather uses a particular and significant expression to indicate the conquest. Joshua is told that the Lord would deliver the city into his hand. The expression indicates complete possession and control. Yet, it is also emphasizes something about the true proportion of Joshua in relation to the great, fortified city of Jericho. The Lord was promising that He would so reduce Jericho and so enlarge Joshua

that the city would be like a grasshopper in the grasp of the Lord's servant. Truly the Lord's servants are made by God's enabling grace to be great and majestic ones of the earth (Ps. 16:3; 18:35). They can do all things through their heavenly Joshua who strengthens them (Phil. 4:13).

Friday, September 2nd - Joshua 6: 1, 2

Jericho was a city not only fortified by massive walls and secured by tightly shut gates, but it was also full of experienced fighting men whom the Lord designates as valiant warriors. Far from these facts disheartening Joshua, they indicated to him that the Lord was promising to deliver into his hand a rich trophy, not reduced trash. The glory of God is more clearly manifested and the blessing of our reward in His service is enhanced when the challenge over which we triumph by God's enabling is great. Let us learn to delight in our facing such great challenges, and not dread them.

Saturday, September 3rd - Joshua 6: 3-5

In addition to His promise of victory, the Lord also provides Joshua with a strategy for his attaining the triumph over Jericho. The strategy and tactics that the Lord lays out for His servant are ones that no man could ever discover or even imagine. This is so because the method of conquest given by the Lord appears to be (and without the blessing of God's almighty hand would in fact be) weak and ineffectual. Yet, the Lord blesses the means of His choosing with effectual power, whether those means are a young shepherd facing a giant, or a man dying on a cross promising to all who believe in Him eternal life.

Sunday, September 4th - Joshua 6: 3

The first component of the Lord's strategy is the commitment of all of Israel's soldiers. Never does the Lord break the integrity of the fellowship of His people, and only rarely does He divide them into companies with differing assignments. Our Captain of the Lord's host leaves no reserve in case the main body fails because when His people march in trusting obedience to His Word, they never fail, but are always led in triumph (2 Cor. 2:14).

Monday, September 5th - Joshua 6: 3

The entire fighting force of Israel is to be committed to a series of marches. For six days they are told to make a daily march to, around, and from Jericho. To any observer, this seems to be a commitment to marching circuits that amount to six daily repetitions of futility. No one march would accomplish anything, neither would the series of marches achieve anything except exposing Israel's soldiers to insult and possible injury from the people and valiant warriors within Jericho. Why did the Lord command His people to pursue such a course of apparent foolishness? At least one reason, if not the only reason, would have been to train His people (then and in all ages thereafter) to trust and obey the clear Word of the Lord, even when that Word appears foolish to their finite and fallible understanding. The six-day course of marching to no apparent effect would effectively work in the hearts and minds of those of the Lord's new creation, training them to persevere in trusting the Lord even when no apparent result issued from such trusting obedience. Our God is always more interested in building up His people in the faith than He is in tearing down his enemies.

Tuesday, September 6th - Joshua 6: 4

In addition to all of Israel's men of war being committed to a series of marches around Jericho,

the priests and the ark are also to form part of the daily processions. The priests and the ark had proven to be key instruments in the dividing of the Jordan's waters. Therefore, such instruments of the Lord's grace that had served to open the way into Canaan for Israel were assigned by the Lord to be with the army of Israel to signal not the mere breach and division of Jericho's walls but the complete demolition of Jericho's stone wall. The means of God's grace have an irresistible power to break down all strongholds, natural as well as those that men erect against the Lord and His people.

Wednesday, September 7th - Joshua 6: 4

By express direction of the Lord, the priests and ark led the sons of Israel into the Jordan that divided as they stepped into it (Josh. 3:6, 8, 11, 13, 15-17). However, this verse does not make clear to us whether the priests and the ark were to lead the procession of Israel's soldiers or to be embedded in their midst. Whether the Captain of our salvation leads us to refreshing waters or embeds Himself amid two or three gathered in His name, we are made to be more than conquerors through Him who never leaves or forsakes us.

Thursday, September 8th - Joshua 6: 4

Not only would the priests carry the ark as they had done when Israel crossed the Jordan, but seven of them are here directed to carry trumpets before the ark. The number seven signifies perfection. The trumpets are not the two silver trumpets that served to signal Israel's moving camp, gathering at the tabernacle, or responding to a battle alarm (Num. 10:1-10). Instead, the priests are instructed to blow rams' horns such as had been sounded at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:13) and that served to announce the Day of Atonement and the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:9). These horns, accordingly, signify God's gracious salvation and the resulting liberation and joy of His people. The Church of the Lord does not triumph through the use of battering rams to force open Jericho's gates or ladders and scaling equipment to climb over Jericho's walls. The Church of the Lord triumphs through the supernatural means of the gospel of salvation that her members believe and sound forth.

Friday, September 9th - Joshua 6: 4

The second half of this verse instructs the priests and soldiers of Israel to march around Jericho seven times on the seventh day. This would cap six days of fruitless marching with seven apparently futile circuits on the seventh day. However, at the end of the seventh circuit, the priests were to blow the horns that would signal jubilee for Israel and judgment for the people of Jericho. On the seventh day of this campaign, signifying the fullness and perfection of time according to the reckoning of the Lord, a signal would sound that would indicate the unleashing of the almighty power of God for His people and against their enemies. Let us, therefore, learn from this to persevere in doing good, knowing that in due time we shall reap abundantly.

Saturday, September 10th - Joshua 6: 3, 4

The priests and men of war of Israel were directed by God to march for seven straight days. One of those days, perhaps even the seventh day that was to be filled with manifold marching followed by fighting, would have been the Sabbath day. How are we to reconcile the Lord's command that His people should keep that day holy with His directive now that they should march and perhaps fight on that day? Deeds of mercy and necessity, however strenuous they

may prove to be, when performed by us in response to God's clear direction and providence will prove to be acceptable worship in His sight and service that He will richly reward (Mt. 25:34-40).

Sunday, September 11th - Joshua 6: 3-5

From the seemingly futile efforts, repeated by Israel over the course of six days and multiplied on the seventh day, would come astonishing results. The great wall of Jericho would fall, literally *beneath itself*. It would entirely collapse, as though the rocks composing the wall would prostrate themselves in homage to the Lord who approached them in the midst of His people, glorifying God and serving His people by giving to them unimpeded access to the city. This collapse of the wall would leave its builders and inhabitants exposed in their fearful dismay to an easy conquest by Israel. The awesome and abundant provision of the Lord more than vindicates the apparent weakness and foolishness of the means He employs.

Monday, September 12th - Joshua 6: 3-5

The procedure of repeated marches around Jericho would be hard even for people of faith to swallow. But such procedure was like gnats when compared with the camel of the incredible provision of Jericho's walls collapsing at the sound of Israel's trumpets and shouting. Could Joshua swallow both gnats and camel and so report faithfully the Lord's words to Israel? There is much in the Word of God that can seem incredible even to us and even in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Yet we, like Joshua, do well to regard the Lord's promises as great and precious, even when they appear improbable, if not impossible, in view of the circumstances that surround us. Through our trust in and obedience to our Lord, we shall always at the right time find Him to be not only true to His promises but better than them.

Tuesday, September 13th - Joshua 6: 6, 7

Questions raised in connection with the strategy and promised success the Lord outlined for Joshua in vv.3-5 begin to be answered in vv.6,7. Would Joshua believe and faithfully report to Israel the gnats and camel of the marching of Israel and the collapse of Jericho's walls? He who had learned to trust and fully follow the Lord through more than forty years of God's consistent grace and marvelous works for His people, shows by the instructions he faithfully gives to the priests and people that he would neither doubt nor desert his loving Lord now.

Wednesday, September 14th - Joshua 6: 6, 7

The question raised in v.4 regarding the placement of the priests in the processions around Jericho is answered in v.7. The priests and the ark were not, according to Joshua's orders, to lead the procession. There were to be armed men leading the procession. If the Lord made this arrangement explicit to Joshua, Scripture does not record that fact for us. Instead, we are given the impression that the Lord entrusted His servant to make effective arrangements in light of Joshua's knowledge of and loving trust in his Lord. The more we know our God, the better we understand all things. The more we store His Word in our hearts, the better we can see the right way in all things (Mt. 5:8; Ps. 36:9).

Thursday, September 15th - Joshua 6: 6, 7

It may appear from what Joshua adds regarding the place of the priests in the procession that he was adding to the words of the Lord. It may also appear, from what Joshua does not report to the priests and people about the collapse of Jericho's wall, that the Lord's servant was taking away

from the words of his Master. In both instances, however, it appears likely that the Lord entrusted His servant with an executing commander's discretion. No criticism of how Joshua communicated these divine directives can be found in Scripture. A pastor is expected to know well the condition of his flock, partly so that he might, with wise and loving discretion, minister God's Word to them in measures most fitted to their understandings. Our Savior did this very thing when He told His disciples that He had many more things to share with them that they could not at that time yet rightly receive (Jn. 16:12).

Friday, September 16th - Joshua 6: 6, 7

With what he communicates in these verses, Joshua mentions nothing about the Lord's promise that Jericho's wall would collapse on the seventh day. The servant of the Lord gave to the people of God instruction without incentive. He held back the incentive until the time he judged best (v.16). Our religion is reasonable but that does not mean that either the Lord or His servants are always obliged to give reasons for everything they command. It is at times best that we reckon it to be right and reasonable to obey clear instructions from those who have proven to us their trustworthiness.

Saturday, September 17th - Joshua 6: 8, 9

One of the major themes of the Book of Joshua is the demonstration of the strong faith of the people of Israel whom Joshua led into the Promised Land. These Israelites were the children of the generation that had died in the wilderness because of their unbelief (Heb. 3:15-19). Contrary to natural expectation, we find in our verses an account of one of the many demonstrations of strong faith in the children of those who had not believed the Lord so as to follow Him fully. This generation of Israelites to a man does not refuse to obey the instructions of the Lord delivered to them through Joshua. They do not question the apparent foolishness of their marching repeatedly around Jericho, but instead they fall into the prescribed formation and set out according to the directives of the Lord. They who by faith in the words of God had already walked through a miraculously parted river, heartily walked in the way not of their logic and liking but in the way of their true and trusted God.

Sunday, September 18th - Joshua 6: 8, 9

When we compare the Lord's instructions given in vv.3-5 with the performance of the priests and soldiers of Israel in vv.8,9, we may be observing an imperfect obedience. According to the instructions, it appears that the trumpets should have been blown only on the seventh day. Yet we read in vv.8,9 of the priests blowing the trumpets on the first day of their marching. If this is imperfect obedience, the event of the wall of Jericho falling shows that it does not invalidate the promise of God. Our calling is to obey our Lord, yet our blessing ultimately issues not from our imperfect obedience but rather from the perfect obedience of our Redeemer.

Monday, September 19th - Joshua 6: 8, 9

The actions of the priests blowing their trumpets in these verses may not, in fact, represent imperfect obedience. They may quite rightly have determined that if the Lord had instructed them to carry the rams' horns, He obviously intended that they should blow them on each march. That way, by the sight of the ark in the middle of the marching procession as well as by the sounding of the trumpets, the Israelites would grow even stronger in their faith, knowing that the Lord was in their midst. At the same time, the Canaanites in Jericho would for an entire

week see with their eyes and hear with their ears a gracious warning calling for their repentance before the final sounding of the trumpets of their judgment.

Tuesday, September 20th - Joshua 6: 8, 9

These verses make clear what was unclear in vv.3-5. The priests carrying the ark and the seven priests carrying the rams' horns were not to lead the procession, as they had done when the people crossed the Jordan. Instead, they were embedded in the middle of the marching column of Israel's warriors. The difference seems to result from the character of each mission. The river crossing was a work of God *for* His people, while the destruction of Jericho was to be a work of God *for* and *in* His people through the men of war who would do the fighting. The embedded priests and ark of the Lord speak to the faithful of their God empowering them by His dwelling with and mightily working within them (Col. 1:29).

Wednesday, September 21st - Joshua 6: 8, 9

A significant hint of the efficacy of the means of God's grace is contained in the phrase *before the Lord* (v.8). It indicates to us the faithful consciousness of the Israelites that the Lord, whose Word they were obeying and whose ordinances were in their midst, was vitally among them, guarding, guiding, and empowering them in their way. If we by faith look for the living God in our worship and work, we too shall be conscious that we do all in His presence, by His grace, for His glory, and for our own highest and enduring good.

Thursday, September 22nd - Joshua 6: 10, 11

Although the priests' trumpets sounded, Joshua commanded the men of war to be silent. Their natural impulse to shout was to be resisted. Their less spiritual descendants years later shouted when the ark of God was brought into their camp, only later to be captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:5-11). Here, the faithful soldiers of the Lord were ordered to keep silent and to hear the Lord's trumpets and show themselves to be His ready servants. There would come a time when Joshua would order shouting; then there would be shouting of bold and joyful exultation in the righteous judgment and glorious triumph of their Lord.

Friday, September 23rd - Joshua 6: 10, 11

The sons of Israel marched around Jericho then returned to their camp as they were ordered to do by Joshua. They kept unity and order in their march. No one broke ranks to attack or even to shout at Jericho. It would have been an impressive and perplexing spectacle for the inhabitants of Jericho. Yet, our attention is especially focused upon the fact that Joshua had the ark of the Lord taken around the city. God with His people is the most vital and determining feature of any endeavor of the Lord's servants. If He is with and for us, who can stand against us?

Saturday, September 24th - Joshua 6: 12-14

These verses inform us that the sons of Israel persevered in following the Lord's orders completely for the prescribed six days of their marching a single daily circuit around Jericho. What did such repeated marching accomplish? Very likely it served further to unnerve the already disheartened inhabitants of Jericho. However, the key to our understanding what was truly and most vitally accomplished is found in Josh. 1:3 where the Lord told His servant that every place on which the sole of his foot would tread had been given to him by his God. Therefore, such marching done under Joshua's orders was an act, emphasized by its daily

repetition, by which the people of God were claiming their inheritance from the Lord. If God gives to His people, no one on earth or in heaven can withstand their walk by faith through which they possess every spiritual blessing that God has given to them in Christ.

Sunday, September 25th - Joshua 6: 15, 16

In v.15 as well as earlier in v.12, it is noted that Joshua and the people of Israel arose early in the morning to accomplish their daily marching. This notice informs us how eager they all were to obey the Lord's instructions. We should neither dread nor dutiously obey the Lord's will, but rather we should delight in our walking in the way of our Good Shepherd. Our delight-filled eagerness in His service grows when we recognize that His infallible wisdom sets our course, His almighty arm empowers us in that course, and that His holy love has designed the race He sets before us so that it leads to our abundant, blessed, and joyfully triumphant living.

Monday, September 26th - Joshua 6: 15, 16

Joshua and the Israelites were especially eager to walk in the way of the Lord on the seventh day. On that day their marching would be multiplied and would be but the prelude to the work they would do of conquering Jericho. Far from their shrinking from the increased and dangerous workload of that day, they show themselves eager to bear a load that was made light for them by their being yoked together with the Lord, whose yoke is easy and who makes for us all burdens light by His enabling grace and power. It is no wonder that when Joshua gave the order for the men of war to shout, they did so with what must have been awesome gusto, for Joshua made it clear to them that the Lord was with them and was giving Jericho to them. When we hear the gospel trumpeted forth, we do well to sing for joy to the Lord and shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation (Ps. 95:1).

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Tuesday, September 27th - Joshua 6: 16-19

These verses are written in most English versions as a quotation of the words Joshua spoke when he called for the Israelites to shout after the priests had blown their horns. In fact, these words were not given as an order by the supreme commander on the field of battle in hopes that his voice could be heard and his host could understand these manifold instructions. These words most likely represent the summary of Joshua's instructions that previously had been clearly and thoroughly communicated to Israel's commanders and, through them, to the fighting men (cf., Josh 1:10,11; 3:3ff). Therefore, prior to the fighting each man would know what he should expect, what he should do, and what he should not do. Teaching is best conveyed prior to the crisis so that those taught may be wisely and well equipped in the crisis.

Wednesday, September 28th - Joshua 6: 16-19

After his having commanded the Israelite army to observe six days of silence, Joshua commands the fighting host to shout. This shout was not the cause of Jericho's wall falling but rather was in consequence of the Lord's promise to give Israel the city. The Lord's promise was the root; Israel's shout was the fruit. We learn from v.20 that the wall fell when Israel shouted but the shouting began while the wall stood and the sons of Israel had cause to shout only because they were told by their Lord through Joshua to do so. It was the power of God's almighty hand working in accordance with His gracious promise that caused the wall to collapse. The Israelites'

shout arose from their faith that their God existed and that He was a rewarder of those who trustingly sought Him (Heb. 11: 6).

Thursday, September 29th – Joshua 6: 16-19

Israel's shout would be accompanied by the hand of the Lord tearing down a wall of man's making. However, before that wall's fall, the Lord erects in the consciences of His people a wall of His prohibition with respect to the things He put under the ban. We read in Lev. 27:28,29 of how the Lord reserves for Himself the right to proscribe from His people's possession and use things of His choosing. The liberty of access the Lord gives to His people is not a license for them to have and use all things as they please. Our highest good is always found when we submit ourselves to the prudent ways of the Lord and deny the unrestrained exercise of our passions.

Friday, September 30th - Joshua 6: 16-19

The Lord puts His ban first in negative terms: the people are not to desire, covet, or take anything stipulated in v.19 as being under the ban. Although the articles of gold, silver, bronze, and iron could be regarded as desirable and useful for the people who had been dwelling in the wilderness for 40 years, the people's taking and using these particular items is clearly prohibited by their Lord, and so they are called by Him to trust in Him with all their hearts and minds and not to lean on their own understanding or desires (Prov. 3:5,6). The things our God withholds from us are not withheld for our harm but rather so that we might seek those things and better things in His loving arms.

Saturday, October 1st - Joshua 6: 16-19

The Lord also puts His ban in positive terms when He declares that the articles proscribed were holy to Him. This does not mean that the Lord was taking from the sons of Israel anything that belonged to them. Ultimately, all things belong to the Lord and it is only due to His common grace that sinners receive daily provision that sustains their lives. As for Israel, the Lord to whom all things in heaven and earth belong was giving to His people unimpeded access to Jericho and victorious possession of the city. He was giving them the land of Canaan and, most importantly, what the land betokened, eternal life in celestial glory wherein they would reign with Christ forever. The Lord lavished true and lasting treasures upon His people, reserving from them only the few trinkets of man-made items that would be put to holy use in the treasury of the Lord. Even what our Lord withholds from us He gives to us as He gives Himself to us. When we possess Him by faith, we possess all things in Him (Mt. 6:33; Rom. 8:28,32; 1 Cor. 3:21). This is the wonderful truth that the embittered older brother of the prodigal son failed to see (Lk. 15:11ff, especially v.31).

Sunday, October 2nd - Joshua 6: 16-19

The people of Jericho were also under the ban of the Lord as we learn from v.17. The fighting men of Israel were not allowed to do with the people of Jericho whatever they willed but were under divine orders to put them all to death. The only exceptions were to be Rahab and her household. Rahab is designated *the harlot* not needlessly to disparage her, but rather better to identify her so that the conquering Israelites would not inadvertently destroy her. Coupled with her being referred to as the harlot is her new and honorable designation as the one who hid the spies for Israel by her faith in Israel's God. The spies are here referred to as messengers and

such they proved to be. They had reported good news of the people of Jericho being disheartened before the Israelites, and now they signal life to Rahab. As Rahab had saved the lives of Israel's messengers, so now her life would be saved because of her faith in Israel's God that bore fruit in her good works for the people of God. Those who rely on the Lord of life for the salvation of their lives are remembered by the Lord, especially in the day of His judgments, and they are distinguished from the perishing mass of sinners. The God who has the hairs of our heads numbered knows when our hearts rely on Him for salvation and He will never let us perish.

Monday, October 3rd - Joshua 6: 20

With this verse, the Scripture narrative proceeds from the Lord's promise and instructions to His people to His provision for them. The people shouted and the priests blew their horns. Never has an army employed such feeble and apparently foolish siege machinery to reduce a resisting city. The people's six days of silent marching around Jericho followed by their seventh-day sounding of the horns and shouting tested their faith. Now that they had shown their faithfulness to their Lord it was time for the Lord's promise to be tested. The people shouted by faith and the wall collapsed in a dramatic manifestation of the faithfulness and power of God. Well did the Israelites believe that God is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

Tuesday, October 4th - Joshua 6: 20

The horn-blowing and shouting of the Israelites were naturally feeble and inadequate means to bring down Jericho's wall. However, by their faith the covenant people performed these things in trusting obedience to their God. The results were that His appointed instrumental means became mightily effective through His power that was the ultimate means of the wall's collapse. Similarly, our prayers can seem feeble, but when faithfully directed to our God they become mighty to the pulling down of great strongholds (2 Cor. 10:5; Rev. 8:1-5).

Wednesday, October 5th - Joshua 6: 20, 21

Israel accomplished the destruction of every living thing in Jericho, sparing only Rahab and her household. Here we must consider the morality of such complete destruction of life at the hands of those who serve the God of grace and giver of eternal life. The miraculous divine parting of a river and destruction of a wall raise no such moral concern. The question of whether this destruction of all life in Jericho was right is answered by Gen. 15:16, which informs us that the inhabitants of Jericho and other places throughout Canaan were exceedingly wicked. Therefore, this act by Israel has the character of a righteous judicial execution of a people who had partaken of God's common grace every day of their lives but who cursed God in response. Also, in Deut. 20:16-18 we learn that the Lord ordered such destruction of the people of the land in order to preserve His people from their sinful influence. God is full of holy wrath toward all sinners every day (Rom. 1:18), and it is a feature of His common grace that He withholds His just judgment until the final day, of which this action of Israel serves as a warning token. In that final day it will not be a city or the inhabitants of a tiny region that will be destroyed, but the heavens will pass away with a roar and the earth and all it contains will be burned up, filling all unredeemed people in the world with terror as they face the wrath of the Lamb of God (2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:12-17). We do well and act in love to warn sinners of that day of wrath.

Thursday, October 6th - Joshua 6: 21, 22

The Lord by His power destroyed the stones of Jericho's wall while the men of Israel executed His righteous decree to destroy all of the wicked living stones of that city. However, there is holy discrimination amid this massive destruction. Joshua, as the servant of the Lord, orders the spies to seek out Rahab and save her and her household as they had promised her they would do. The Lord knows all who are united to Him by faith, and He knows how to save His own in the day of His judgment. While the wicked dread the coming of the day of the Lord, and do so with good reason, the righteous wait with grateful and joyful expectation for that day and desire that their Savior would come quickly (2 Pet. 3:11-13; Rev. 22:17, 20).

Friday, October 7th - Joshua 6: 22, 23

The spies initially had been sent into Canaan to gather intelligence for Israel's mission of destruction. Now Joshua assigns them a mission of salvation. They who had their lives saved by Rahab's deed of faith now serve to bring Rahab out of the destruction of her natural city and to lead her into the citizenship of the people of God. As it was with Rahab then so it will be in the last day with all who in Christ serve others in His name. They will find that they will not only be saved but will also be commended for their loving and faithful deeds and be invited to enter eternally into the joy of their saving Master (Mt. 25:31-40).

Saturday, October 8th - Joshua 22, 23

Not only is Rahab saved, but all of the people and even possessions of her household were saved along with her and because of their relationship to her. The Lord who created us to live and to be nurtured in families delights to save believers and their seed. The familial character of the covenant of grace is expressed in the words of God when He says: *I will be your God and the God of your descendants* (Gen. 17:17). Believers can and do have a greater influence for good on their family members than they may realize now. Believers will come fully to realize their beneficent influence on the final day.

Sunday, October 9th - Joshua 6: 22, 23

Joshua uses terms to describe Rahab that may be true but the use of them at least appears unkind. He calls her *harlot* and *woman* and does not refer to her by her name. Yet, she had been a harlot and was a strange, alien woman to all of Israel. However, when she received an oath from the spies, neither her sinful career nor her alienation from Israel kept her from salvation and new life with and in Israel. Our saving God does love us most tenderly. Yet, at times the ways He treats us would lead us to believe otherwise. At such times, let us look not at appearances but rather to His oath, His covenant, and His blood (Heb. 6:13-20).

Monday, October 10th - Joshua 6: 22, 23

The two spies did what Joshua told them to do. The result of Joshua's order and the spies' obedience to it was the salvation of Rahab and all of her family members who had gathered with her in her house. No mention is made of all her brothers or any of her sisters, so some of her relatives may have perished, and, if so, they did so because of their unbelief. The necessity of salvation is so great, the means of salvation so near, and the terms of salvation so easy, that only the most stubborn and perverse will perish in their sins.

Tuesday, October 11th - Joshua 6: 22-25

There may seem to be redundancy in these verses but what we really have in them is emphasis and development. In vv.22,23 we are told of Joshua's order to spare Rahab and all her household and we are told how his order was carried out. In v. 24 we are reminded of the total destruction from which Rahab and her relatives had been saved (compare with v.21). Then, v.25 seems to repeat what we were informed of in vv.22,23. However, we are not informed of the complete treatment Rahab received until v.25. For in v.23 we were told that while Rahab and all of her relatives who were with her in her house were snatched out of the destruction of Jericho, we also note that they were placed outside of Israel's camp. From v.25 we understand that their dwelling outside of the camp was only provisional. Once Rahab and her family were processed as proselytes, they were (or at least she was) fully incorporated into Israel. The reality of her faith was manifested not only by her deed of hiding the spies but also by her perseverance in her new life as a member of the Lord's Church.

Wednesday, October 12th - Joshua 6: 24, 25

In addition to Rahab and her relatives, all of Rahab's possessions were saved. While it is true that, as Paul writes, we can take nothing out of the world at our death (1 Tim. 6:7), it is also true that our Lord's loving regard for us extends not only to His knowing the number of hairs on our heads but also to His having a loving consideration for all things in our lives, even the material possessions we have, which His Commandment forbids others to steal from us (Ex. 20:15). He not only causes all things to work together for our good, but also stores all that our child's mistake fancies as lost for us at His home, not for our harm but so that we might seek and find even those little things in His arms.

Thursday, October 13th – Joshua 6: 26

The wall of Jericho was destroyed; the people and animals of Jericho were killed; the valuable articles of Jericho were put into the Lord's treasury; the city was burned with fire. What trace of Jericho remained? The memory of the city and its location remained. Here Joshua blankets even those vestiges with a curse. Men would, and generations later did, find themselves under a manifold and excruciatingly costly curse when they set their hands to rebuild Jericho (1 Ki. 16:29-34). God never forgets people's sins against Him unless those people clothe themselves in Christ's righteousness and build their lives upon the rock of God's salvation. God's Word of cursing never loses its power, as Hiel discovered in the days of wicked king Ahab, when the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho (1 Ki. 16:34). Our comfort and joy are in our knowing that the Lord's Word of blessing upon us never loses its marvelous and enriching power.

Friday, October 14th - Joshua 6: 27

Once again we are told that Joshua was exalted and his fame spread through not only the camp of Israel but also throughout the land of Canaan. What had Joshua done to deserve such fame? He had done nothing but humble himself under God's mighty hand and believe and obey God accordingly. All who humble themselves under God's hand will be exalted in due time (1 Pet. 5:6), while all who in their pride seek to secure and exalt themselves, their families, and their possessions, will find themselves cursed and cast down by the Lord into everlasting condemnation and odious oblivion. Mightily does God destroy His enemies; mercifully does He save and eternally and abundantly bless His people.

Saturday, October 15th - Joshua 7: 1

In Scripture there are passages declaring the wisdom, love, and power of the Lord. There are also passages recording both the faithfulness and the unfaithfulness of God's people. The former we found in chapter 6; now in chapter 7 we find the latter. In chapter 6 we were given incentives to trust and obey the God of our salvation. Here in chapter 7 we are given warnings not to turn faithlessly and ungratefully from our God. We are taught and encouraged by this true and reliable account of life in the kingdom of God to be like Joshua, who loved the Lord and obeyed Him fully, and to strive radically by God's enabling power not to be like Achan, who let his lusts, not his Lord, be his guide.

Sunday, October 16th - Joshua 7: 1

This verse introduces us to a chapter that describes for our instruction and admonition the certain and painful consequences that are brought by God upon those who with ingratitude and faithlessness turn from Him. It tells us the sad but true reality that the sons of Israel under Joshua, who formed perhaps the most faithful generation of believers in all time, lapsed from their faithfulness and reverted to their sin. Such inconsistency is, alas, a normative part of the believer's pilgrimage. It is grievous but unavoidable that those delivered by God from the dominion of their sins should still wrestle against and at times succumb to the remnants of their sin. The character and pervasiveness of this moral struggle and inconsistency are described by the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, where he attributes the tension and occasional defeats of the Christian life not to wickedness so much as to wretchedness (Rom. 7:24). While such inconsistencies in our walk by faith are inevitable, we must never surrender to sin but always strive to resist all sinful and satanic wiles.

Monday, October 17th - Joshua 7: 1

This matter of Achan's sin and the implication of all the sons of Israel in it is recorded after the event and from the perspective of the Lord. What is recorded reveals to us much about the Lord and much about His people. It shows us that our God knows all things, even the secret sinful acts we commit as well as the hidden attitudes that prompt them. It makes clear to us that our God is never indifferent to such secret sins, but rather notes and brings them to light. We learn from this account how easily even keen believers can be overtaken by the mere remnants of their sin, and faithlessly act against the God who had faithfully saved them. We learn how our personal sin affects our brethren. Most importantly, we learn that where our sin increases, God's grace abounds all the more.

Tuesday, October 18th - Joshua 7: 1

This verse begins by implicating the sons of Israel in the sin of one of their brethren. Does this mean that our God punishes the innocent along with the guilty? How can He who extricated Rahab from the massive divine judgment upon Jericho do such a thing? The truth is not that God punishes the innocent majority for the sins of the guilty individual. Instead, we shall see as this chapter unfolds that while Achan coveted in his heart and stole with his hand, the sons of Israel show that they were nurturing sinful complacency in their hearts and replacing their exercise of faith with carnal enthusiasm. Achan is rightly attributed by Scripture as bringing trouble upon Israel (Josh. 7:25; 1 Chron. 2:7), but the Lord sinlessly used Achan's sin to discipline the seminal

emergence of sinful complacency in the sons of Israel.

Wednesday, October 19th - Joshua 7: 1

While we can distinguish the sin of Achan's action from the sin of Israel's attitude, there is a sense in which there is solidarity of all the people of God in their imputed righteousness and in their residual sinfulness. We are members one of another in Christ, and as one member of the body suffers, all suffer to some extent. This is not a cursed feature of our covenantal unity in Christ but rather a blessed fact of our loving reconciliation to God and to one another in Christ. We and our brethren are each others' keepers in Christ, and as inconvenient and painful as that may be for us at times, when we contemplate the loveless and sinfully selfish alternative, we realize that we would truly have it to be no other way.

Thursday, October 20th - Joshua 7: 1

This verse takes pains to make Achan's identity clear to us. It names his tribe as well as his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather. This is done in part to sober us with the truth that the sins of children cast a shadow of dishonor upon their living families as well as their ancestral families. Our knowing this can help us better to resist sins that will bring disgrace upon us as well as upon those who have loved and raised us.

Friday, October 21st - Joshua 7: 1

From 1 Chron. 2:1-7 we learn that Achan's great-grandfather was Zerah, one of the two sons born of the sinful adultery that Judah had committed with his daughter-in-law, Tamar. While the sins of the sons cast dishonor upon the fathers, it is also true that the sins of the fathers predispose their sons to sinful bondage from which only the Lord's saving mercy and power can save them. God has no good and lovely candidates to save, but only guilty and corrupt sinners to redeem. We are all broken and corrupted by our sins, but God loves us, saves us, and lovingly disciplines us when the remnants of our sinful natures reassert themselves. That is precisely why He tells us that even when a member of the body of Christ is overtaken by a resurgent sin, those who are truly spiritual should seek to restore the sinner gently, looking to themselves lest they, too, be tempted (Gal. 6:1). All of us in the body of Christ still have within ourselves sufficient wretchedness to make us fall as Achan fell, should we be put into temptation such as he suffered. That is why we are taught by our Lord daily to pray that we not be led into temptation (Mt. 6:13).

Saturday, October 22nd - Joshua 7: 1

This verse further makes clear to us that God sees and is angry toward the sins of His people. However, the divine anger referred to in this verse is not the holy and condemning wrath of the Lord, but rather is the painful application of His loving discipline that in due course produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness in His sinning children (Heb.12:5-11). Even so, it is a terrifying thing for sinning, ungrateful children to fall into the corrective hands of their Father who is the living God and a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28,29).

Sunday, October 23rd - Joshua 7: 1, 2

In v.2 we find Joshua and his soldiers beginning precisely as they had done with the conquest of Jericho (Josh. 2:1). This time, however, there is a different spirit animating the spies, while the hidden reef of Achan's sin and the fierce anger of the Lord were already set to shipwreck Israel's

efforts to defeat Ai. It is not the plans, purposes, and power of men that determine a venture's outcome, but rather it is whether men are dependent upon the Lord or are leaning on the arm of their own puny flesh.

Monday, October 24th - Joshua 7: 2, 3

The carnal spirit that had begun to invade the sons of Israel becomes apparent before the hidden sin of Achan is exposed. We see this carnal and complacent spirit in the report of the spies to Joshua. They make no mention of the Lord in their report, contrary to the previous spy report wherein the Lord was the central focus (Josh. 2:24). Furthermore, these spies (who may have been different men from the two who had been sent to spy out Jericho) do not return with humility and thankful joy to report what they knew the Lord had done. Rather, they came in a spirit of complacency, presumption, and pride with recommendations that bordered on directives that they gave to Joshua, telling him not to send all of Israel to Ai, but only a small number of the soldiers of the covenant nation. These are sinister, not spiritual, differences we detect between the two spying reports. How different is the haughty from the humble spirit! The former, God opposes; the latter, He exalts.

Tuesday, October 25th – Joshua 7: 2, 3

These spies give a logical report, a reasonable report. They had totally defeated the much larger and greatly fortified city of Jericho. Ai was smaller and more vulnerable in every way. Logically, fewer workers would be required to tread this small vineyard. However, this report is in no way theological. The Lord is left out of all their reasoning, except that they may have presumed that as He had empowered them at large Jericho, so He would do with little Ai. Presumption and ignorance are not features of faith. It is only faith that unites us to the Lord. When we are united to Him, we can do all things (Phil. 4:13); without Him we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5).

Wednesday, October 26th - Joshua 7: 2, 3

The way that these spies characterize the job of the conquest of Ai is sadly indicative of their new faithless and ungrateful spirit. Prior to this point, all the sons of Israel marched by faith in, gratitude to, and love for their Lord. They trusted and obeyed the Lord, coming to Him and finding their rest in Him. They learned from Him and found the yoke He placed on them easy and the burden He gave them to be light. They trusted God and God empowered them to triumph. Now the Lord's service is regarded as needless toil. By faith we do exploits (Heb. 11); by presumption we manufacture complaints and excuses in our contemplation of the Lord's service. Achan may have brought trouble on Israel, but the Lord used that thorn in their flesh to prod His people out of their ingratitude and to return them to His sufficient and success-producing grace.

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Thursday, October 27th - Joshua 7: 3, 4

While it is bad that the spies left the Lord out of their reckoning, it is worse that Joshua did so too. No mention is made of Israel's leader seeking the Lord for His direction as he had so faithfully and consistently done prior to this point. It may not seem a great sin when believing men act without their consulting the Lord for His wisdom and enabling power, but it is an

omission that can cost them dearly when they discover that without Jesus they can do nothing (Jn. 15:5).

Friday, October 28th - Joshua 7: 4, 5

These verses briefly tell of the defeat of Israel's soldiers by the men of Ai. The results of the spies and Joshua relying on their own understanding are bitter and surprising for all of Israel. Those who had entirely slain the giant of Jericho are now routed by the dwarf of Ai. The shock manifested by the fighting men of Israel indicates how their suffering such a defeat had been a matter inconceivable to them prior to their engagement in battle. Such an attitude that dismissed their defeat as being unthinkable did not arise as confidence from their faith in God, but was the hollow shell of their presumption that was shattered when they encountered the reality of their impotence without God. True faith leads us realistically to reckon with our weaknesses and the power of the things challenging us, but also leads us to reckon on the enabling grace and power of our God. This is what Abraham did when he considered his natural impotence yet grew strong in faith as he considered even more the power of the God who had promised him a son (Rom. 4:19-21). Israel's attitude and actions here manifest the glibness of presumption rather than the glorious operations of such faith.

Saturday, October 29th – Joshua 7: 4, 5

The soundness of Israel's defeat and the shame of her soldiers' performance are indicated to us by the casualty figures recorded in these verses. We can also gather how the battle unfolded from the account we have in Scripture. Israel went with approximately 3,000 soldiers to fight Ai. To the Israelites' surprise, they found that, unlike the men of Jericho, the men of Ai resisted them. This resistance may have been enough to rout Israel, for the casualties are recorded in connection with Israel's rout and the pursuit of Ai's soldiers. Whether Israel lost her 36 men in the initial resistance of Ai or during their fearful flight, the fighting men of God's covenant people showed little or no fighting spirit in this battle. An army does not retreat still less does it break into a rout with just over a 1% casualty rate. It was because Israel's faith had subsided, not because of the might of the men of Ai, that the hearts of Israel suddenly melted and became worse than the previously melted hearts of the Canaanites (Josh. 2:11).

Sunday, October 30th - Joshua 7: 6-9

These verses record a summary of Joshua's reaction to the defeat of Israel by the men of Ai. In this account, our Lord gives us a profitably instructive glimpse into the pathology of the fear that always grips us when our presumption and complacency are shattered in a way that our faith never can be. Our faith in our Lord makes us more than conquerors; our presumption puffs us up only to reduce us to desperation in the face of even mild trials.

Monday, October 31st - Joshua 7: 6

The first features of Joshua's response to Israel's defeat are profound grief and humiliation. Victories inspire joy within us and exalt us with honor. Christ always leads His people in true victory (2 Cor. 2:14). Joshua and the people of Israel had experienced this triumphant course but had come apparently to expect such victories rather than humbly and with living and fresh gratitude to ask for them daily from God, whose mercies are new every morning and are ours, not for our haughty assuming, but for our humble asking (Lam. 3:23).

Tuesday, November 1st - Joshua 7: 6, 7

The calamity over which Joshua and the elders of Israel express their grief is evident and undeniable. The torn clothes and dusty covering of Israel's leaders are outward manifestations of their inward grief. The question here is whether they are showing godly sorrow or ungodly remorse. Godly sorrow arises in connection with one's consciousness of sin, whereas ungodly sorrow results from the hurt and even anger that issue from the misery of one's unpleasant circumstances. Although the torn clothes and applied dust are certain tokens of sorrow, they indicate neither the true character of such sorrow nor the way painful wounds can be healed. It is not what Joshua applies to his body but rather what comes out of his mouth that reveals to us the character of his sorrow. It is not our cries but rather to whom and in what spirit we direct them that indicate whether we are on the road of godly repentance or godless remorse.

Wednesday, November 2nd - Joshua 7: 7

Joshua's words show that he believes in the Lord but the course and insinuation of those words indicate that fearful unbelief is mixed with his faith. The leader of Israel does right to turn to the Lord whom he had evidently ignored. However, he turns to the Lord in a fearful panic which clouds his perception of the sin that is within Israel and of the goodness of the God of Israel. It is true for most of us much of the time that we believe, but we also need our Lord to whom we imperfectly turn to help us vanquish our unbelief.

Thursday, November 3rd - Joshua 7: 7

Joshua does not even think to ask the Lord what He knew to be wrong in Israel. Instead, Joshua questions the purposes of the Lord in His leading Israel into the Promised Land. When sin is asserting its broken mastery over us, such sin is the last thing we suspect to be the cause of our suffering. It is the first thing that a believer walking by faith suspects, and such faithful believers hasten to ask the Lord for His gracious forgiveness. Those in sin would blame God in order to excuse themselves from blame, while those cleaving to Christ by faith would have God to be true and every man, especially themselves, to be liars.

Friday, November 4th - Joshua 7: 7

Joshua asks the Lord why He had brought Israel fully into Canaan. The leader of Israel asks in an accusing way, insinuating that the Lord had sinister purposes that He covered with sweet promises. Joshua therefore makes His Lord to be not the holy God of Israel who by His divine love, wisdom, and power was committed to saving them, but rather to be a deceiving despot, intent upon destroying them. Joshua could not be farther from a right apprehension of the truth. We are shocked to see this faithful man who had followed his Lord fully for so many years, now resemble the grumbling and ungrateful Israelites who had refused at Kadesh-barnea to trust the Lord and enter the land He was giving to them. We should be sobered to see how even giants of the faith can be reduced to such fearful depths when they fail to strive at all times to enter into the blessed rest that results from their trusting the Lord whether they abound or are abased.

Saturday, November 5th - Joshua 7: 7, 8

Faith leads us wisely to regard the Lord reverently, and not foolishly and rashly to charge Him with malicious intent. Had God wanted to destroy Israel, He could easily have done so east of the Jordan, at any time in the wilderness, or when the Israelites were in their bondage in

Egypt. Joshua's fears cause him temporarily to lose his right reason and foolishly to open his mouth with charges against His Lord rather than to open his ears to hear what His Lord had to say to him. See how unfavorably this leader of Israel, who had known God's love and gracious blessing for so many years, compares with the Canaanite woman in the Gospels, who hardly knew Jesus and who, receiving painful and perplexingly hard handling from Him, placed the most hopeful construction on all of His dismissive words and actions (Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30). Without faith, even a mature saint is reduced to vanity and fearful folly; with faith, even a babe in Christ wisely and wonderfully prevails with God.

Sunday, November 6th - Joshua 7: 7, 8

When Joshua expresses his regret that he and all Israel had crossed the Jordan, he is as much as saying that they would have been better had they ceased following the Lord and made their own desires, diminished by their fears, to be their guides. As unspeakably bad as it was for the Israelites to have turned their backs on their enemies, it would have been many times worse had they turned their backs on their Lord and refused to follow His directives, as their unbelieving and deceased parents had done. It is better that we stumble in the way God sets before us than that we even think we would be better out of that way.

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Monday, November 7th - Joshua 7: 8, 9

The poor performance of Israel has rendered Joshua speechless before the Lord. However, the Lord is not so concerned with the performance of His people in their endeavor to obey Him as He is with the purity of their hearts in His sight. Joshua therefore laments the bitter outward fruit of Israel's spiritual state and is at this point unaware of the deeper cause he has to grieve over the sinful attitudes and actions of the covenant people, including himself. We poor sinners are inclined to see our problems in terms of our circumstances. Our Lord sees them in terms of our characters.

Tuesday, November 8th - Joshua 7: 8, 9

Although Joshua claims in v.8 to be speechless, he goes on in v.9 to say something. What he says indicates how his fears are multiplying. From the current minor and single defeat, Joshua extrapolates a series of reversals that will conclude with Israel's extermination and will leave God Himself incapable of manifesting the glory of His name. These words reveal Joshua's increasing fear, folly, and faithlessness. As Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration did not know what to say but proceeded to say something foolish (Mk. 9:5,6), so Joshua lets himself speak when he should have been listening to his Lord, and the words he speaks are untrue, disgraceful to himself, and dishonoring to the Lord.

Wednesday, November 9th - Joshua 7: 8, 9

Our fears do not make us humble but rather puff us up with arrogant conceit. See how Joshua, by growing lax in his faith and entertaining his fears, presumes to tell the omniscient and almighty God what will happen to His people in the future. In the flash of a small defeat it is as though Joshua's appreciation of and gratitude for the Lord's miraculous parting of the Jordan and

demolishing of the wall of Jericho have vanished in a rising cloud of dread. Our sin not only makes us guilty but also corrupts us with stupidity and folly.

Thursday, November 10th - Joshua 7: 9, 10

The pathology of Joshua's rising fear is, alas, familiar to us all. Only the one who deceives himself, thinking with presumption that he stands unshakably, denies having an experiential understanding of such fearful hysteria. Yet, in spite of these fearful fits being common experience among all believers, the Lord shows no sympathy for or toleration of such hysteria anywhere in Scripture. As Jesus often told His disciples to stop fearing, so God here calls Joshua to spiritual attention. In answer to Joshua's question of what would become of the Lord's great name, the Lord tells His servant to arise. The Lord will yet show His glory through His people, sinful and fearful though they may be for a time. Our saving Lord not only vanquishes our sins and accusers, He also stops our debilitating fears and infuses us with strength and hope by His call for us to arise from our dejected falls to resume our exalted position of standing with and for Him. Let us rejoice that our Lord so quickly and resolutely lifts us out of our fears.

Friday, November 11th - Joshua 7: 9, 10

Joshua regarded Israel's defeat to be the harbinger of the death and destruction of the covenant nation and of its relationship with her Lord. We should be very thankful that our God shows no sympathy or patience with such consuming dismay. When we are in our sin, we think nothing of our sin until its bitter consequences come upon us. Then we think too much of our sin and its sore consequences, as though sin will yet have mastery and death will triumph over us. Thanks be to our God that where our sin increases His grace abounds all the more. Thanks be to Him who so quickly snatches us out of the consuming fires of our fears and restores us to holy and loving fellowship with Him from whom we have drifted. When we think our sins will yet separate us from our God, He tells us in no uncertain terms that nothing will ever be able to separate us from His love for us in Christ (Rom. 8:32-39).

Saturday, November 12th - Joshua 7: 10, 11

There is a reason for Israel's defeat but there is no cause for Joshua to wallow in self-pity and fearful anticipation. Our faith in the Lord is reasonable because our God gives us reasons for all that we experience as we seek, however imperfectly, to work out our salvation. Accordingly, the Lord quickly and clearly informs Joshua of the cause of Israel's defeat. That cause was not Ai's strength but Israel's self-caused weakness. The covenant people had sinned against their saving Lord. That was the cause of their defeat. The cure was not their wallowing in their shame, guilt, and fearful misery, but rather their repentance from and faithful dealings with their sin and its consequences.

Sunday, November 13th – Joshua 7: 11

A very careful reading of this verse is essential for our understanding of what the Lord is actually stating as the cause for Israel's defeat. Upon first reading, we are led to think that Israel as a whole had sinned by taking things under the ban. However, we have been told in v.1 of this chapter that it was Achan alone who took things under the ban. Therefore, the challenge to our understanding correctly what the Lord is saying in this verse is to determine whether all Israel was accounted guilty due to the sin of one man, or whether there was an actual, as distinct from an accounted, connection between the guilt of Achan and the guilt of Israel. The judgments of

our God may at times seem perplexing, but we can be certain that they are entirely righteous and, for those who belong to His redeemed people, gracious and loving. If we look for these elements in this verse and in all of the Lord's judgments in our lives, we shall find them and be guided into an edifying and comforting grasp of His mercy that triumphs over judgment.

Monday, November 14th - Joshua 7: 11

The first statement expressed by the Lord is that Israel had sinned. It is clear that this charge is not a mere accounting of all Israel with guilt on account of the sin of a single man, Achan. The procedure of the Lord from this point onward serves to open the eyes of all in Israel not only to Achan's sin of action but also to Israel's general sin of attitude. There was corporate sin as manifested in Israel's spiritual complacency as we read of in vv.2-4. There is also the corrective instruction the Lord gives to Joshua in Josh. 8:1ff that differs significantly from what Israel had initially sought to do in her attack upon Ai. At the time when those divine instructions will be given, we shall find the men of Israel following them to the letter because then there will have been restored in them a right spirit of grateful devotion and vital dependence upon their Lord. Israel had sinned, and the Lord knew it before His people realized it, and by the loving discipline of the Lord the sin of His people was not indulged but effectively purged from them. Therefore, we must not faint when our Lord's correction comes upon us, but should rejoice in the application of His cleansing and comfort (Heb. 12:4-11).

Tuesday, November 15th - Joshua 7: 11

To the general charge of Israel's corporate sin of a complacent attitude, the Lord adds the aggravating features of the ripened sin of action that was committed by one member of the covenant community. These features are strung together with such connecting words as: *also*, *even*, and *both*, indicating that Achan's sin was an extension of Israel's sin. The seminal sin of Israel's complacency fostered, rather than impeded, the growth of manifold fruits of sinful actions from Achan. We see a sobering pathology in this divine charge: complacency leading to coveting, leading to criminal actions. Let us then ask our Lord to search and try us so that if even the seed of sinful and eventually harmful ways is in us, we may repent and walk in the Lord's everlasting and enjoyable way of holy and happy union with Him by faith (Ps. 139:23,34).

Wednesday, November 16th - Joshua 7: 11, 12

The Lord makes clear that it is not the strength of our enemies (the world and the devil) that overcomes us, but rather it is our own sin that weakens us. Nor need it be fully ripened sin that brings spiritual deadness and defeat upon a single believer or a whole company of saints. The sin of Achan's action was but the tip of the vast iceberg of Israel's spiritual drift from the Lord. We are, even when we just begin to neglect our great Savior, our own worst enemy (Heb. 2:1,3).

Thursday, November 17th - Joshua 7: 11, 12

The weakness of the sons of Israel resulted from their accursed separation from their holy and almighty Lord. All who are separated from the Lord, even by their neglect or heedless wandering and certainly by their consciously planned and executed disobedience to Him, are accursed and will find the Lord refusing to bless them until they repentantly turn from their sin and to their Savior. When we are united with Christ by faith, we are blessedly enabled efficiently to accomplish all things (Phil. 4:13). When we are without Christ, refusing Him and

driving Him from us due to our neglect and rebellion, we shall find all things we try turning against us. But, even if we are accursed for a season, things can blessedly change for us. As the Lord gives directions for Israel's repentance and restoration, so He will always provide us with such help when we are in need of and have desire for such divine direction.

Friday, November 18th - Joshua 7: 12

The Lord makes it clear to His people that He will not blessedly be with them so long as they harbor sin in their hearts and in their midst. While the clear focus of this verse is on the removal of the things under the ban, it is evident that the Lord expects from His people repentance from their attitude as well as from the singular action of Achan's stealing. The sinful action of the one was but the full and bitter fruition growing from the complacent attitude of the many. Achan had coveted and taken items that were devoted to the Lord, but the complacent attitude of his brethren blinded them from seeing the Lord rightly and in His light seeing with vigilance and caring concern what their brother, Achan, had been doing. Even when a man is overtaken in sin, we who are spiritual must look to ourselves, knowing that in our hearts there yet remain dregs of sin that can, if we are sufficiently tempted, move us from sinful thoughts to sinful actions (Gal. 6:1).

Saturday, November 19th - Joshua 7: 13, 14

With these verses, the Lord moves from charging and convicting His people to correcting them. God does not leave His people wallowing in their sin; nor does He desire that they dwell long in a state of painful conviction. Instead, He guides His people through His restorative measures. Therefore, He charges Joshua and Israel to rise up from their sin and sorrow and to consecrate themselves. The restoration the Lord prescribes will achieve a purging of Israel from their sin, guilt and misery. The people would submit to a specific and measured process in which the Lord would detect and reveal the arch-offender. There is justice and mercy in this process that will lead Israel in a path of corporate self-examination while giving special opportunity for Achan to confess his sin before God and men. The process would also manifest the glory of the Lord's omniscience and holiness, teaching His people that He knows all of their sins and that He will tolerate none of them. The discipline of the Lord brings many benefits and rids us only of that which would destroy us.

Sunday, November 20th - Joshua 7: 15

Once the arch-sinner is precisely identified, the Lord gives specific instructions regarding what His covenant people are to do with him. The sinner was to be executed and burned along with all possessions that belonged to him and all the people of his family who apparently knew to some degree the sin of Achan. This verse powerfully demonstrates the truth, not with words but with people's lives, that the Lord has an attitude of holy ruthlessness toward sin in His people. That is why Jesus urges us to pluck out our eye if it offends us (Mt. 5:29) and why, at the seminal stage of the formation of the Christian Church, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for their lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11). However, we also perceive mercy prevailing over this righteous and sobering judgment. That mercy is evident from the fact that although all the people had sinful remnants in their hearts as did Achan have in his, God only brings this full temporal judgment upon the one who was given into the power of his sin while the rest would be spared from what they, but by the grace of God, also deserved.

Monday, November 21st - Joshua 7: 16-18

These verses tell us how Joshua and Israel obeyed the Lord in their submitting themselves to the process whereby the Lord would reveal the one guilty of stealing the items under the ban. The unreserved readiness of Joshua in this matter is evident in his early rising. It was surely the case that general conviction of sin took place throughout all of the tribes of Israel as the process of revealing the culprit unfolded. A chorus of silent confession and repentance must have arisen from all Israel while Achan remained hardened in his sin and foolishly thought he could hide his guilt, even as the selection steadily and surely focused on him. In this Achan was like Adam who thought that he could hide from his Creator by burying himself in the trees of creation. But there is no escape from the Judge of all the earth, as both Adam and Achan learned, and as all sinners will ultimately learn. Yet, as Adam and Achan also learned, it is better for God's people to be judged for their sins in time that their souls may be saved in eternity.

Tuesday, November 22nd - Joshua 7: 19

Achan's sin increased from his coveting to his stealing to his hiding and deceiving and, by his silence, denying his guilty deed. Yet the grace of God abounds even to him all the more. At any point of the selection process, Achan could have confessed his sin and found that his God, being faithful and just, would have forgiven him and cleansed him from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9). Now that he was exposed by God's selection, it would seem to be too late for him to be forgiven his manifold and persistent sins. Yet, the wonderful truth that God's grace comes to the worst offender even in the last hour of his life is evident in the gracious and loving appeal that Joshua gives to Achan to confess his sin and be freed from it. The tender words, *my son*, by which Joshua addresses this convicted sinner, are charged with amazing grace. They are akin to the designation that Jesus gave to Judas when He referred to His betrayer as, *friend* (Mt. 26:50). So long as a sinner has breath, he may be freed from his guilty separation from the Lord and restored as a child of His saving grace and a friend at blessed peace with God, if he would only confess and repent of his sin and seek the saving mercy of the Lord.

Wednesday, November 23rd - Joshua 7: 19-21

Joshua not only appeals to Achan to confess his sins, but he also leads Achan to an understanding of what his confession would entail. By it, the sinner would give glory where he had sought to steal from the Lord. He would give praise to the Lord for His gift of forgiveness that would be his for the asking. He would bless the people of Israel by being no longer a thorn in their flesh but rather a trophy of the Lord's restoring grace. Unlike Judas, who refused friendship with the Son of God and held fast to his sin, Achan confesses his sin and repents of it, glorifying and praising God, blessing Israel, and rejoicing in his sonship.

Thursday, November 24th - Joshua 7: 20, 21

In Achan's confession of his sin, all of Israel can find blessing. The way that Achan clearly and openly describes the progression of his sin in v.21 provides a valuable and vital admonition for all believers. As God told Cain, sin always crouches at the doors of our senses (Gen. 4:7). Achan saw, not the Lord with the eyes of his heart, but certain prohibited items with the eyes of his flesh. He saw with a coveting desire to have the material beauty that enticed him and blinded him to the true treasure and beauty of the Lord's holy love and gracious gifts. He did not resist coveting so he was impelled to take the things forbidden. He did not enjoy them openly, but buried them in the ground under his tent. There is no greater folly, no worse loss, and no

more painful misery than when sinners exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for the deceptive pleasures of sin (Rom. 1:21-23). We do well to learn to hate even sinful thoughts and suggestions and to love righteousness and the Lord of righteousness with all our hearts.

Friday, November 25th – Joshua 7: 22-24

Achan's confession served to guide Joshua's messengers to the sinner's guilty stash. The stolen items were gathered together with Achan and all that pertained to him. They were then taken to a valley that Israel named Achor, after the Hebrew word for trouble. There, in accordance with the Lord's directive, Achan, his family, and all his livestock were to be judicially executed and burned along with all their possessions. As awful as this execution was, it did serve then, and its record in Scripture continues to serve now, for the peace and purity of the Church, showing all with eyes to see the extensive reach of sin from one man's heart and hand, as well as the thoroughly destructive wages of sin. This is but a token of what all we sinners deserve, and the wonder is that the God whom we offend daily lets us live with our families and possessions for years in this world.

Saturday, November 26th - Joshua 7: 25, 26

Before Achan was executed along with his family, Joshua asked him why he had troubled his brethren by a sin that had brought defeat and death to them. There is no answer to that question, for sin is essentially irrational. But Joshua's question and the subsequent execution of Achan raises another question: why, after he confessed his sin, was Achan put to death? Why after his glorifying and praising God did the Lord bring such trouble on the man who had brought trouble on Israel? We see justice in the act of Achan and his family and possessions being annihilated, for the man by his sin treated the God who had given him his life and all that he had in his life as though that giving God were non-existent. But do we perceive grace in this sober scene? We do see grace in the fact that while the Lord's discipline would trouble Achan on that day, the forgiveness that confessing sinner received transformed his death and loss into an eternity of life and gain. For Achan it was a day of trouble for an eternity of triumph. For the people of Israel it was a day of purging from their sins and lifting of God's curse and a restoration of their holy and loving communion with Him. Mercy triumphs over judgment here for Achan, for Israel, and for us.

November 2011

(These notes are revisions of ones first published July/August 1991)

Sunday, November 27th - Proverbs 19: 1,4,6,7

Material wealth can, of itself, enable one to acquire very little of true value. It may serve to generate flattering solicitations, which men may delude themselves into thinking are manifestations of true friendship and admiration. But most people prove their fickleness by abandoning a rich man or even a flush family member once he suffers a reversal in his fortunes. God's Word provides true and lasting treasure, namely, power to transform one into a person of loving wisdom and integrity. Though the world may value money above love, wisdom, and integrity, God and godly people know that mere material possessions cannot compare with such precious virtuous powers.

Monday, November 28th - Proverbs 19: 2,3,8,16

Knowledge is practical, keeping us from acting thoughtlessly, which one does when he confuses mere action with good and right accomplishment. One's attainment of knowledge is not a matter of indifference. There is a moral dimension to education. It is not good for a person to be ignorant. When one acts in ignorance he sins because whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). However, the one seeking knowledge and wisdom not only acts in his own highest self interest, as he, through education, is enabled to find good things, but by his obedience to the Lord—the source of wisdom and goodness—he produces good things for his own security and satisfaction, as well as for the blessing of others. True knowledge prompts responsible, happy, and productive living.

The heedless, irresponsible fool lives not to learn and gain thereby, but rather to act out his ignorance to the harm of others, but especially to his own harm. When he consequently suffers, he blames the Lord, as though the One who is the source of all blessing and whose wise and wonderful Word he has ignored, were responsible for his woe.

Tuesday, November 29th - Proverbs 19: 5,9,28

There is more than mere repetition between verses 5 and 9. Both verses warn that a false witness will not go unpunished. When we are tempted to be less than truthful, this reiterated fact alerts us to the reality that we are accountable to a higher Judge, who cannot be fooled by lies (Heb. 4:13). When we are injured by the lies of others, this truth should comfort us. Not only will the liar fail to escape responsibility for his lies (v.5) he will positively perish (v.9) because of the inherently sinful nature of lying. Justice is founded on truth and righteousness. A liar seeks to found it upon deception and iniquity, which are inherently incompatible with justice. Our just God sovereignly and certainly guarantees that liars will not prevail.

Wednesday, November 30th - Proverbs 19: 10

This verse speaks of two related incongruities. The first deals with privilege, the second with responsibility. We are told that fools do not measure up to the wearing of luxury. This is so not only because fools lack the wherewithal legitimately to earn and enjoy abundance, but also because the fool's perverse and weak character will be intoxicated by the heady privilege of luxury. Hence, fools will be confirmed in folly and will inevitably abuse their abundance. It is worse, however, when a person is given responsibility beyond his competence. He then either will fail outright, injuring himself and spoiling the work for which he is responsible, or he will divert blame due to him while he tenaciously clings to his superior position, subverting those who are truly superior to him and would serve with greater competence in his position. Let us guard our aspirations (Ps. 131: Rom. 12:3), and learn to promote others to higher levels of responsibility and reward which they deserve and can rightly bear (Phil. 2:3,4).

Thursday, December 1st - Proverbs 19: 11,19

We can be angry without sinning (Eph. 4:26), but fostering and giving vent to unbridled rage is no virtue. Godly discretion will make us consider our reactions, enabling us patiently to forbear trifling transgressions committed against us, while reserving righteous indignation for instances warranting its expression. Undisciplined anger grows to be a man's own punishment, as he endures, in the words of Charles Bridges, *the miseries of a fierce intestine war, driven about by the fury of his raging lust*. Such hotheads condemn themselves to perpetual turmoil, inwardly and outwardly.

Friday, December 2nd - Proverbs 19: 12

Sinful, lustful, undisciplined anger damages its perpetrator more than anyone else. However, the legitimate, righteous wrath of a superior justly consumes, not the superior himself, but rather the deserving objects of his wrath. Therefore, we should fear, not the petulant outbursts of others' unbridled anger, so much as the principled wrath of a magistrate (Rom. 13:1-5). There is, of course, a way to be at peace with those in authority over us, especially with the one King who matters above all. When we enjoy a vital and continual peace with God through Christ (Rom. 5:1), we stand and serve in grace, and are recipients not of consuming wrath, but of mercies that are new and refreshing each day (Lam. 3:22,23).

Saturday, December 3rd - Proverbs 19: 13,14,18

In our fallen, sinful world, families can degenerate into disgraceful camps of mutual destruction and misery. Accordingly, a son, instead of growing in strength and godly knowledge, grows into a foolish waster, dishonoring and serving to destroy his father, the source of his own life. Also, a wife, rather than being a loving helpmeet, becomes a nagging hag. The Lord transforms disintegrating families, making fathers productive, wives prudent, and directing parents lovingly to discipline their children in the Lord, so that the children may be saved from destroying their parents and themselves through sinful folly. May our Lord's healing grace rule in our hearts and homes.

Sunday, December 4th - Proverbs 19: 15,24

Although lazy people do little or no work, they do not really rest either. The deep sleep into which they thrust themselves is that of increasing debilitation. Their persistent evasions of responsibility and of the exertions of God-given work lead to an atrophy of all their abilities. Hence, they hunger, but can do nothing to satisfy themselves; they aspire, but fail to bestir themselves to accomplishment. What a living death the sluggard creates for himself! Thanks be to our God, who delivers us from such misery while encouraging and enabling us to labor diligently in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

Monday, December 5th - Proverbs 19:17

Here is a beautiful encouragement for us to be generous toward those in need. We know that all true grace comes from the Lord. Yet He honors those who not only receive such grace themselves, but who also exercise it with respect to others, especially those who could never repay such generosity. Our exercise of grace is pictured as our lending to the Lord. In other words, we never lose grace—or for that matter any godly virtue—in the giving thereof. Rather, what we give remains to our account, and returns to us from the Lord with interest.

Tuesday, December 6th - Proverbs 19: 20,21

Besides our being finite and fallible in our understanding, our hearts are deceitful due to that sin nature which is prevalent in the unregenerate and residual in the regenerate. Therefore, although we are inclined to entertain varied aspirations and formulate numerous plans in order to realize our conceived goals, we do well to realize that we each have the capacity within us to adopt ineffectual plans toward the pursuit of legitimate goals, as well as to aspire to things illegitimate. Such realization should humble us, not so that we never adopt goals or make plans, but so that we submit them to wise, godly counselors, and submit ourselves to their counsel when we perceive the veracity and wisdom of the Lord in such counsel. When our plans are crossed

by God's truth, it is for us an opportunity to reject that which is doomed and to accept in its place that which will stand and secure our true blessing.

Wednesday, December 7th - Proverbs 19: 22,23

The word translated *kindness* in v. 22 comes from the Hebrew, (*hesed*), which has the meaning of loyal kindness when issuing from men, and covenant, steadfast redemptive lovingkindness when issuing from the Lord (Ps. 23:6; 89:28,33; 119:41,124,149,159). The lovingkindness of a man is a fruit of his having first received the lovingkindness of the Lord (1 Jn. 4:19), and is sustained and deepened by a man's growing reverence for the Lord. High and holy regard for God leads one to life and security, and renders him a derived source of truth and lovingkindness to others. Such integrity and lovingkindness may not serve to generate much material wealth, but these virtues are far more valuable than all the money in the world. It is the desire of men but also of God to see them flourishing in our hearts and through our loving and serving hands.

Thursday, December 8th - Proverbs 19: 25,29

There are those who boast of treating all people alike, as though it were the height of wisdom and equity so to do. In reality such treatment is merely convenient for the one treating, not just or appropriate for the one receiving the treatment. The Word of God teaches us to exercise a holy discrimination. We learn that godly living and relating to others involves our rightly assessing the character of others and treating them accordingly. Fools and scoffers, being rendered insensitive by their willing addiction to sin, require firm, sometimes ruthless (though righteously so!) handling, if for no other reason than to subdue the ill effects of their scoffing and have their subjugation serve as a warning to others. Understanding persons, however, respond to reasonable communications, even if they come in the unpleasant form of reproof. It is, therefore, words to the wise and blows to the wicked. Let us be wise ourselves and relate to others with holy discrimination.

Friday, December 9th - Proverbs 19: 26,27

Rebellion against legitimate authority, especially familial authority, renders shameful and disgraceful the one so rebelling. Such rebellion begins not by overt opposition to one's superiors, but rather when one stops heeding the sweet reasonableness of a superior's discipline. Neglect is the seed from which rebellious assaults grow, issuing ultimately in the disgrace and just condemnation of such negligent and rebellious souls (Heb. 2:1,3a).

Saturday, December 10th - Proverbs 20: 1

Neither wine, which is an element of the Lord's Supper, nor even strong drink (Dt. 14:26) are in themselves evil or injurious, whereas the love of them, which leads to intoxication, is. The wise person learns how rightly to control potent elements, rather than to be controlled by them. It is manifestly tempting to many to deliver themselves into the power of drink, so that they might imbibe the delusive joys it promises. Yet those seeking strength or escape from misery in a bottle, only find themselves mocked by false promises, while their lives, families, friends, and circumstances all suffer injury, as though they were beaten in a brawl. An overarching love of wine, or money, or any other creational thing will always injure, but a supreme love for the Lord will edify and bless the lover and many others (Eph. 5:18).

Sunday, December 11th - Proverbs 20: 2,8,26,28

A potentate has power of life and death over his subjects (v.2). So his subjects do well not to provoke his wrath. A just ruler wields not only power, but righteous authority as well (v.8), and accomplishes more with a disapproving look against evil than does a ruthless tyrant with many blows. Yet, a just king so hates wickedness that he will not wait to be outwardly provoked thereby, but will actively search it out with the aim to destroy it (v.26), although not before it is ripe for destruction, and, more importantly, not before the fruit of covenant love is developed in the king's true subjects. All in authority who rule according to such righteous wisdom will be preserved through all challenges; for such kings rule in harmony with the King of kings, who loved righteousness and hated lawlessness unto death (Heb. 1:9). His (*hesed*) love received by lesser kings, begets such love in them, and, through them, begets it in those under their authority.

Monday, December 12th - Proverbs 20: 3,7

A man driven by foolish perversity will be contentious with slight or no provocation, as though the real or imagined faults and failings of others were the cause of his and the world's misery. An honorable man does not blame others for his failures, nor does he consequently brawl with others. Instead, he concentrates on removing logs in his own eye before dealing helpfully with others. The cultivation of the peaceable fruit of righteous integrity is his aim above that of contending with others, even when they are wrong. Nor is this priority ineffectual in checking the spread of strife. A man of integrity walks in the way of serving, not strive against, others. His integrity saves him from worlds of trouble, and it is communicated through him to others, especially to his children.

Tuesday, December 13th - Proverbs 20: 4,13

When one capitulates to the desire for immediate self-gratification, he becomes heedless with respect to cause and effect, responsibility and reward. The motto of such a one is: Work least, enjoy most. But such a motto is suicidal. Diminished labor always results in diminished returns. Our aim should be ever to open our eyes both to current responsibilities and to potential opportunities to increase our responsibilities. We should actively seek to do *more* work for the Lord and His people, not to escape from our assigned portion. What we sow by God's enabling grace, we shall with enduring satisfaction reap (Gal. 6:7-10).

Wednesday, December 14th - Proverbs 20: 10,14,17,23

Akin to the sluggard, considered in yesterday's reading, is the swindler, who attempts to acquire on the cheap. There are bargain hunters who, in their relentless quest to save money, often compromise themselves morally. Such cheapskates are never happy, for bitter consequences and divine condemnation are the hidden costs of their supposed bargains. The most effective and happy procurers are those willing to bear a fair cost. Their intention is to deal fairly before God, rather than shrewdly with men.

Thursday, December 15th - Proverbs 20: 15,21

Such cheaters as were considered yesterday never prosper because their methods are self-defeating and their values are confused. Of course there are material riches to be had in this world; but wise and godly character, which beautifully, usefully, and edifyingly expresses itself, is infinitely more precious. Indeed, only godly character can safely and edifyingly receive and employ material abundance (Phil. 4:12,13). Those who peevishly demand and receive blessing

which had been held in reserve for them until their characters would have matured spiritually, will only prove themselves prodigals who squander all in the far country (Lk. 15:11-32).

Friday, December 16th - Proverbs 20: 5,12,27

The plans of a man's heart are not like his outward appearance and behavior, which can be perceived by sense of sight and sound. But the Lord, who made man's physical senses, is greater than those senses. He perceives all things. Furthermore, he enables wise and godly souls to discern with accuracy such hidden things as a man's plans. Sometimes people willingly reveal the contents of their hearts and minds to godly souls, whose wisdom and discretion commend them as trustworthy confidants. At other times it seems that the godly man has an uncanny ability to read others' thoughts and feelings. Such ability develops when one allows his own conscience, which is the lamp and testimony of God (Rom. 2:14-16), to guide him to greater and clearer depths of self-awareness.

Saturday, December 17th - Proverbs 20: 6,11

Talk is cheap. Professions of love and loyalty abound, yet we need consult no farther than our own personal experience to realize that there are precious few in the world who have demonstrated such virtues. Most of us can count on one hand the people with whom we would trust our lives. Such trustworthy souls have demonstrated their loyalty over the years; they have not merely talked about it. However, there is a consistency to virtuous character, so that once it is demonstrated, even in a young person, its demonstration wins the confidence of others. Our Lord Jesus so distinguished Himself as a boy, and continued throughout His life to demonstrate, as well as profess, His love for us. Likewise, He would have us to be not hearers of His Word or talkers about it, but doers of it (Jas. 1:22-25).

Sunday, December 18th - Proverbs 20: 9,24

We like to think that we understand ourselves and our world. Yet we are blind to most of the ways and workings of life. This is due to the fact that God, whose wisdom is inscrutable, whose power is immeasurable, and whose ways are infinitely beyond our comprehension (Rom. 11:33-36), governs every life for His own glory. We may know this, but as to what circumstances in our lives would best serve such an exalted end, we are incompetent to know. In addition to our finitude limiting our understanding, there is the blinding power of sin, which renders our hearts deceitful (Jer. 17:9). Accordingly, men may proudly plunge ahead into deepening darkness, or humbly walk according to the sanctifying and enlightening leading of the Lord, who calls us not to discern the way of life, so much as to discern and follow Him, the good Shepherd and Lord of life, who perfectly knows the way that leads to His glory and our highest good.

Monday, December 19th - Proverbs 20: 16

The principle at the heart of this verse seems to be that trust must be earned by faithful acquaintance, or else insured in some way when afforded to a stranger. We are told to avoid giving ourselves as surety for others, but here we are instructed to demand surety from borrowers whom we do not know. The reason is singular, namely, that in our fallen world, which is full of slackers (18:9), swindlers (20:10,14,17,24), and sinful charlatans, prudence in our dealings with others is made necessary. The innocent will not suffer by their providing such insurance (when extremity forces them to borrow), for their faithful diligence will keep them from forfeiting their pledge. In the case of a man who proves a bad risk, the innocent lender is protected by the

insurance. Our failure to exercise godly prudence serves only to confirm others in their wicked irresponsibility, while injuring us ours. But prudence in this area preserves the innocent and induces the irresponsible borrower to develop a life of faithful diligence and abundant productivity.

Tuesday, December 20th - Proverbs 20: 18

Because we are finite and fallible, we need to gain a wide, deep, and true perspective before we put plans into action. Especially should we do this when our plans are to challenge some enemy, whatever form the foe may take. The way we gain this perspective is by our humbly seeking the wise and godly counsel of others, which presupposes that we know and have cultivated friendships with such counselors. Above all, of course, the Lord is our best counselor (Is. 9:6), who enables us to find and recognize godly allies.

Wednesday, December 21st - Proverbs 20: 19

Sympathetic and understanding souls draw out the thoughts of others who rightly and willingly confide in them (v.5). Such considerate counselors are responsibly discreet with the sensitive information they receive, for their sole concern is to strengthen, not wickedly to exploit, the vulnerabilities of others. Not so with the slanderer, who gathers sensitive secrets from others in order to satisfy his own perverse curiosity, and who publishes those secrets in hopes of deriving a relative sense of superiority over those whose weaknesses he has so cruelly exposed. We should not allow ourselves to be seduced into confiding in such slanderers; nor should we associate with those who demonstrate a penchant for purveying idle talk or rumors about others.

Thursday, December 22nd - Proverbs 20: 22

Because we lack perfect wisdom and power and are ourselves tainted with sin, we are incompetent to repay evil. Our tendency is to be either ruthlessly severe or fondly indulgent. But our Lord will repay in perfect measure, not only the evil deed, but also the sinful thought and intention. God's just judgment of the wicked and His gracious salvation and vindication of the righteous deal not only with injurious action, but also insidious attitude.

Friday, December 23rd - Proverbs 20: 25

Satan pressures; God persuades. The last thing our Lord desires is rash commitment on our part. He would have us to count the cost of godly discipleship before we commit to it. True, some by interminable consideration seek to evade the claims of Christ, but our prompting rash responses is not the way to deal with such evasions. By thoughtful and responsible consideration we should grow, and encourage others to grow, to where a *yes* means and continues to mean *yes*, especially with respect to Christ, in whom all of the promises of God are *yes* and *Amen* (2 Cor. 1:20).

Saturday, December 24th - Proverbs 20: 29

Each stage of human development has its own highlight. There is the agility of youth, and the wisdom, patience, and perseverance of old age. Of course, these things only become a glory and an honor when both youth and old age and all between are dedicated to the Lord. Otherwise, the youth wickedly employs his strength, and the gray hair of the aged testifies to the accumulation of bitter, wasted years. In Christ we grow from strength to strength (Is. 40:29-31), and from

glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). In the body of Christ, the particular strengths of each serve to supply what may be lacking in other members (1 Jn. 2:12-14).

Sunday, December 25th - Proverbs 20: 30

Even torturous trial has its lessons to teach. Remember Job. Pain, which we naturally hate and avoid, can serve as a great purifier under the fatherly administration of the Lord (Heb. 12:4-11).

Monday, December 26th - Proverbs 21: 1,2

We naturally think in self-approving terms. But sin so distorts our hearts that we not only seek to deceive others, but we actually do deceive ourselves (Jer. 17:9). The Lord sees through all deceptive devices (Heb. 4:12,13), and His analysis of our hearts is perfectly true. How wonderful it is when He gives us a new heart in Christ (Ezek. 36:26,27), one that is responsive to the promptings of His grace. Yet whether by grace or by wise and just power, the Lord controls all men's hearts. Not that He interferes with the spontaneous flow of their thoughts, but by His inscrutable wisdom He so arranges all things that all men—from ruling kings to the lowliest of slaves—freely choose and act according to His will and for His glory (Jn. 19:10,11).

December 2011

Tuesday, December 27th - Joshua 8: 1

The sin of Achan had troubled Israel, but it was a sanctifying troubling that aroused the nation from incipient spiritual complacency. With her sin purged, Israel is once more empowered by the Lord to continue her conquest. Whenever the Lord's people harbor sin, they have trouble; whenever they mortify sin, they have triumph. If we drift from our saving Lord, He will lift His preserving and empowering hand from our lives and allow us to taste the bitterness of the death from which He has delivered us. By His ordaining such thorns in our flesh He draws us back to that life and victory we can only have in and through Him.

Wednesday, December 28th - Joshua 8: 1

The response of the Lord to Israel's repentance is swift and comforting. God takes Joshua back to the foundational instructions He had given to Israel's leader after the death of Moses (Josh. 1:2-9). The fears that had broken out as a result of Israel's defeat and the people's recognition of the sin they had harbored in their camp via Achan and in their hearts by their complacency are vanquished by the strong command of the Lord. Sin breeds fears while faith in our merciful and almighty Savior casts out all fear and fosters grateful confidence (1 Jn. 4:18).

Thursday, December 29th – Joshua 8: 1

After the Lord relieves Joshua and the people of Israel of their fears, He applies corrective instruction in place of their previous complacency. Whereas their logic had prompted them to reckon that with Ai being smaller than Jericho, the Israelite fighting force could be reduced (Josh. 7:2,3), here the Lord commands Joshua to employ the whole fighting force of Israel. The unity of the Church should trump all concerns of mere efficiency as contemplated by finite and fallible men. The great growth of the early church in spiritual maturity and in the number of her members took place when the members thought, believed, and acted as one man (Acts 2:1-12; 4:1-47; 4:32-35). The Apostle Paul stresses the unity of the Church in Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:3-16 and Philippians 2:1-4. In the sight of the Lord, *how* the Church serves by faith in Him and in

loving unity is of far greater concern than *what* the Church endeavors to accomplish in the name of efficiency without Him and as divided brethren.

Friday, December 30th - Joshua 8: 1

We see the Lord healing the painful lacerations of Israel's sin in full and measured steps. He first calms the fears of His people, then He supplies the proper strategy they had failed to apprehend in their first battle with Ai. From there the Lord goes on to give His people a promise of victory. It is a paradox that God should both require all of the fighting men of Israel to be committed to the battle while at the same time promising them total victory as a gift from Himself alone. Yet while we can do all things through our Lord who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13), our Lord strengthens us with His empowering might precisely so that we might work out the salvation He gives to us (Phil. 2:12,13) in the unity of His Spirit (Eph. 4:3). Therefore, the Lord makes it clear to His people that while the victory will result from His almighty power alone—not from Israel's increased number of soldiers—it pleases Him to work in almighty fashion in and through all of His people.

Saturday, December 31st - Joshua 8: 1, 2

The Lord promises total victory to His people. Yet, here at Ai He does not put the city and all it contained under the ban as He had done with Jericho (Josh. 6:17-21). Here at Ai the Lord allows His people to take for themselves the spoil and cattle of Ai. If only Achan had waited upon the Lord, he could have had as much and probably more than he had taken at Jericho contrary to the Lord's ban. Achan also could have had and enjoyed openly and legitimately in grateful company with his brethren the things such as those he had to hide under his tent in guilty secrecy. Nor would Achan have served to bring defeat and trouble upon Israel but, instead, his obedience to the Lord would have hastened Israel's victory and enrichment. When we do not trust and love our Lord, we view His delays as permanent denials and then set ourselves up for temptation to steal today what our Lord would gladly give to us tomorrow. Well do we heed the instruction of the Word that tells us to wait on our Lord (Ps. 25:3; 27:14; 37:7; Isa. 40:31).

Sunday, January 1st - Joshua 8: 2

To all that the Lord has provided for His penitent people He also adds a specific strategy they are to employ to attain their promised victory. The ambush at Ai is very different from the marches around Jericho. Different times and situations call for different measures that only our Lord knows best. Let us learn to hear and to heed Him in all things and at all times.

Monday, January 2nd - Joshua 8: 2-9

The Lord prescribes the ambush to Joshua in v.2. Joshua communicates the specific features of the ambush to the fighting men of Israel in vv.3-9. The design of this strategy is clearly for Israel to lure the men of Ai out of their defensive position in their city where they would be exposed to Israel's forces that would enclose and destroy them. There are a number of things we can learn about our Lord and His ways with His people as we reflect upon the various features of this plan of attack. The first thing we observe is how quickly and fully recovered the men of Israel were from their slump into complacency. Now they jump to spiritual attention, none of them questioning the plan or hesitating to put it into action. Swift acceptance of and obedience to the clearly revealed will of God is the first fruit that issues from the life of repentant sinners.

Tuesday, January 3rd - Joshua 8: 2-5

In these verses, Joshua explains to Israel's soldiers how they are to set the ambush for Ai. This explanation takes place not in a council of war for the consideration of the commanders, but rather is given when all of Israel's fighting men are on their return march to Ai. Those who have learned to trust their saving God and to walk in His ways know that their heavenly Leader tends to unfold His plans for them when they are on the march that He has ordered. It is when we are in the way of obedience to our Lord that He shows us the next step we are to take in His plan. He does not unfold the entirety of His designs for us to ponder but reveals those designs to us in stages that we are to perform.

Wednesday, January 4th - Joshua 8: 2-5

The God-given strategy was in its design and proved to be in its execution most devastating for the enemies of Israel and most preserving of the men of Israel. When the hand of the Lord moves, it always moves terribly against His foes and powerfully for His people. When the Spirit of the Lord fills and empowers us, our service for the Lord is amazingly effectual. The love of our God prompts Him to engage His omnipotence for us, in us, and against all that would stand against us.

Thursday, January 5th - Joshua 8: 2-5

There is a complexity to the battle plan that would appear beyond the capabilities of unseasoned soldiers to perform. Only masterful commanders divide their forces in the face of their enemies, and consider doing so only with highly experienced troops. Even then, the tactic is highly risky. However, when it succeeds, it is elegant and terribly effective. The Lord can afford to call His people to highest endeavors precisely because the arm of His strength empowers them and the light of His wisdom enlightens His people as they trust and obey Him by faith.

Friday, January 6th - Joshua 8: 2-5

In addition to the complexity of the divine strategy, its execution is further challenged by its timing. Once Joshua divided his force, he sent his 30,000 best soldiers to a position behind Ai. For them to reach their appointed place they were obliged to perform a night march—another challenging battle maneuver. Yet, the Lord's arm is not restrained by the things that hamper man. The light and the darkness are the same to Him, as He uses both in His orchestration of good for His people (Ps. 139:12; Rom. 8:28).

Saturday, January 7th - Joshua 8: 2-5

We should note that Joshua commanded the fighting men of Israel. When complacency was setting into the hearts, minds, and hands of the Israelites, we saw Joshua being virtually instructed by the spies he had sent out and complying with their instructions (Josh. 7:2-4). When we drift from the Lord, we lose a sense of the authority and enabling power that we have when we serve faithfully our heavenly Joshua who calls and equips us with His unlimited authority.

Sunday, January 8th - Joshua 8: 3-5

The number and placement of the troops Joshua selects for this ambush are significant. There is some debate regarding the accuracy of the number 30,000, but if that number is correct then Joshua placed 75% of his army in ambush (cf., Josh. 4:13, that speaks of 40,000 as being the entire fighting force). This strong side of his army was concealed behind the city of

Ai. Actually, they were set on the western side of the city (between Ai and Bethel), although the front of the city faced north (v.11), but the point is that the greatest strength of Israel's fighting force was hidden. Our Lord delights to conceal His strength in apparent weakness and His wisdom in seeming folly (1 Cor. 1:22-25). Our Lord has hidden the fullness of His wisdom and knowledge in Christ (Col. 2:3), not from us but as secured treasures for us. Christ has clothed the might of His majesty in the meekness of His humility. We who serve such a God should expect Him to direct us to invest our greatest hopes in the hidden power of prayer rather than in the open display of our performance.

Monday, January 9th - Joshua 8: 3-5

With Israel's main force dispatched to form a hidden anvil, Joshua and the remaining 10,000 men of his army make their way to the frontal approach of Ai as the visible hammer. Accordingly, the weak side of Israel is shown to Ai. The people of God can always afford to appear weak in their open meekness and humility because with them and for them is always the hidden arm of the Lord's prevailing power. The people of the Lord can afford to appear weak because they have hidden strengths that will make them more than conquerors (Rom. 8:36,37).

Tuesday, January 10th - Joshua 8: 3-5

Joshua will not only *appear* before Ai with a numerically weak force, but he and the fighting men with him will *act* as though they are weak and fearful. They who know from the promise of their Lord that they will have certain and complete victory (vv.1,2), are to pretend, for a time, that they are fearful and defeated. Such deceitful appearance has its place in the economy of the Lord's triumph for His people. The supremely misleading appearance in the divine economy was when Jesus, in the appearance of sinful flesh, yielded Himself to be regarded as a blasphemer of God and a seditious leader of men. Such misleading appearance drew out men's worst—the fearful flight of His own disciples and the cruel mocking of His enemies—even as He was actually accomplishing the salvation of all of His people in every age. Let us learn not to fear or refuse our being reduced for a time by our Lord, but let us learn to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, knowing that in due time He will exalt us (1 Pet. 5:6).

Wednesday, January 11th - Joshua 8: 3-5

Although these verses tell how Joshua divided his forces, each of the verses contains the word, *all*, stressing the unity of the Israelites in their actions. The first *all* in v.3 speaks of the singular and united movement of the army of Israel. No longer is a mere portion working without all the others, as had been the case with Israel's first attack against Ai. In vv.4,5, the unit cohesion of each of the divided forces is indicated by an *all* in each verse. The Church, being composed of diverse members, is yet an organic whole, with each part contributing its distinctive share (1 Cor. 12:12-18) while all members together labor by the direction and power of the Lord to preserve the unity of the body (Eph. 4:3) and to build the whole Church up in love (Eph. 4:14-16).

Thursday, January 12th - Joshua 8: 5, 6

The intention of the ambush was to lure the army of Ai out of its defensive position in the city. Their going out would expose the soldiers of Ai to the destructive squeeze of Israel's vise. This would result in maximum casualties for Ai and minimum casualties for Israel. Joshua expresses supreme confidence that the men of Ai would take the lure and render themselves easy

pickings for Israel. Joshua had that confidence because his Lord had told him clearly that through this ambush strategy He would give the king, soldiers, and people of Ai into Joshua's hand. When our God promises us something in no uncertain terms, we do well to grow into a full assurance of understanding that if God is with us no one or nothing can stand against us (Rom. 8:31; Col. 2:2).

Friday, January 13th – Joshua 8: 7

This verse conveys far more than an order from Joshua to the fighting men of Israel. It speaks of the wisdom, power, goodness, and love of our divine Shepherd, who makes His people lie down and rise up for their own greatest good. Joshua and all of the army of Israel were together walking and waiting and working by their purified and strengthened faith, rather than by their own desires as had been the case in their previous advance upon Ai. Now, by their trust in and obedience to the Word of the Lord, they were all where they were by the revealed will of God. They were all in their assigned places in prescribed numbers and focused on a right purpose with great expectation by the Lord's direction and by their faithful determination. They would be called to arise and to labor at warfare, and yet Joshua makes it clear not only that their labors would be abundantly fruitful but especially that such fruit would result from the Lord's giving, not from their taking Ai. We are called to strive according to the directives of God's Word, knowing that our striving prevails by God's power that mightily works for, in, and through us (Col. 1:29).

Saturday, January 14th - Joshua 8: 7, 8

Joshua makes clear that on this attempt Israel's seizing of Ai certainly will be accomplished. It will be accomplished in what may seem a curious way. When Israel shows her weakest force and that force acts like routed cowards before the attacking men of Ai, precisely then will Israel's strength be unleashed upon the empty city and the army of the Aites that would be trapped between Israel's divided forces. The result would be the destruction Ai's forces and the burning of the city. All of this would be according to the wise and prevailing direction and blessed empowering of the Lord's people. Yet, the faith of God's people would play its part. By faith the men of Israel would march to and deploy themselves around Ai according to the command of the Lord through Joshua. By faith the weak force would act even weaker; by faith the strong force would strike in timely fashion. All of this called for humility, trust, and courage—blessed fruits of faith that now abounded in the army of the living God.

Sunday, January 15th - Joshua 8: 8

Joshua reminds the fighting men of Israel that they were serving under divine orders. Those orders, however, were delivered through a faithful man of God's choosing. When Joshua heeded the counsel of the spies he had previously sent to Ai, he failed in his office of godly leadership, substituting for the ever wise and prevailing counsel of God the finite and fallible directives of men. Now Joshua spoke with conviction and authority as he knew that he had faithfully perceived and communicated to Israel the unfailing Word of the Lord. We should be profoundly grateful that our heavenly Joshua ever, only, and always thought, spoke, and acted not according to the desires of men but according to the will and word of His Father. Our salvation depended on His perfect obedience to His Father's will.

Monday, January 16th - Joshua 8: 8, 9

Joshua and the men of Israel had followed the directions of God to the letter. They were where they were and were preparing to do what they would do because they were following the word of the Lord that Joshua put to them in the form of a command. At this point it is appropriate for us to inquire into the morality of these divine directives commanded by Joshua. Such questioning does not imply any lack of faith in the Lord, but rather a strong faith that tests the spirits to make certain that they are of God (1 Jn. 4:1). The men of Israel had to have settled in their own minds that the deceiving and killing and destroying they were about to perform was right and reasonable, for true faith is reasonable and whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). It is the noble-minded ones who search the Scriptures to assure themselves that the commands of godly men, even in the name of the Lord, are according to God's Word (Acts 17:11).

Tuesday, January 17th - Joshua 8: 8, 9

The morality of killing the Canaanites had been settled in the minds of the men of Israel prior to their attack on Jericho. With respect to the morality of this ambush and of the pretended fearful flight of Joshua and his weaker force, John Calvin well writes: *Surely wars are not carried on by striking alone; but they are considered the best generals who succeed through art and counsel more than by force.... Therefore, if war is lawful at all, it is beyond all controversy that the way is perfectly clear for the use of the customary arts of warfare, provided there is no breach of faith in the violation of treaty or truce, or in any other way....*

Wednesday, January 18th - Joshua 8: 10

With these verses we begin to see the plans of the Lord and the preparations of His people unfold in their performance. Once again the early rising of Joshua and mustering of the fighting men is noted, indicating to us the lack of reluctance and the positive eagerness of the Lord's servants to do His will. Joshua and the elders of Israel stepped out before the fighting men to lead them into their battle position. True leaders in the Church, while being lovingly considerate of the people of God, are charged to be more considerate of the God of the covenant people, and to lead them into all of the ways of the Lord.

Thursday, January 19th - Joshua 8: 10, 11

All of the people of war in Joshua's weaker force followed their leaders into the staging place of their initial feint. When the leaders of the Lord's people lead with true confidence in the Lord, the people follow them with hearty compliance. Let us pray that our Lord would raise up such leaders in abundance in His Church in our day.

Friday, January 20th - Joshua 8: 12

Joshua's total force was about 40,000 men (Josh. 4:13). He had set 30,000 in ambush behind Ai (v.4), leaving him with 10,000 men. This weaker force he apparently divides further, cutting the luring component down to 5,000 men while setting the other 5,000 into a position to perform a subsidiary ambush. What is very clear is that God does mighty works with weakest vessels. Recall how greatly the Lord reduced the forces of Gideon. Let us not fear but let us embrace divine reductions in our lives and in the Church.

Saturday, January 21st - Joshua 8: 12

There is great wisdom in Joshua's presenting to the frontal view of Ai a force of 5,000 men. Had he set before the city a force of 40,000, the king and leaders of Ai would have been inclined to burrow into defensive positions within the city. If Joshua had set less than 5,000 men before Ai, the Aites could have suspected a trap, since it would have been unlikely that a force of approximately 3,000 as had previously been routed would have returned to repeat such a painful and humiliating defeat. Therefore, for the sake of credibility, Joshua sets before Ai a force slightly but not greatly increased in size over the previous force of 3,000, so that the men of Ai would catch the scent of another victory only slightly more difficult than their previous one had been. Our Lord makes us to be wise as serpents when such shrewd wisdom is necessary.

Sunday, January 22nd - Joshua 8: 13, 14

We are told once again in v.13 that all of Israel's soldiers were in the various places assigned to them by the Lord through His servant, Joshua. We begin to see the military genius of these placements in v.14. The king of Ai and his men saw only the Israelites' 5,000-man front and hastened to seize an opportunity for another easy victory. This king, like every carnal man, sees only outer appearances and makes what he wants out of what he sees. But what the enemies of the Lord seize when they seek to lay hands on the Lord's people is a tiger by the tail, or more accurately, the wrathful Lion of the tribe of Judah who indwells and empowers His people, making them to be more than conquerors.

Monday, January 23rd - Joshua 8: 15

Joshua and his 5,000 pretend to be just as the 3,000 Israelites were who had previously fled in fear from the men of Ai. But while this new force acts like the previous one, they are actually filled with faith and empowering confidence in the Lord. Such faith and confidence they had previously lacked. Many of the original 3,000 may well have been contained in this force of 5,000 who were acting out their previous defeat. Our Lord's healing ways with us will often lead us back to where we had disgracefully failed, so that we might from that very point gloriously succeed by His enabling grace.

Tuesday, January 24th - Joshua 8: 15-17

God often reduces His people to a condition of weak vulnerability. Such weakness, however, is not real but only apparent, for when we are weakened by our God it is only to make us strong (2 Cor. 12:10). Such weakening also serves to draw Satan and his wicked servants out of their lair, not to overcome us as they threaten and think themselves confident to achieve, but rather to destroy them as we triumph over them through Jesus. Consider how weakened our heavenly Joshua appeared to be when He was tempted in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1-11), and still more when He hung on the cross to be mocked and despised by His enemies. Yet it was through that weakness that Satan has been disarmed and held up to true ridicule by the saints he would destroy but whom their Redeemer has saved (Col. 2:15).

Wednesday, January 25th – Joshua 8: 17-19

We note from v.17 that apparently sometime between Israel's first and second attack upon Ai, the men of Bethel joined their Aite allies. Once all of this combined force had rushed out of the city in their ignorant desire to achieve an easy victory over the people of God, the God of His people gives Joshua the order to signal the springing of the trap the Israelites had set. With this

signal from a man apparently in fearful flight, whose javelin seemed to be useless, the hidden might of Israel begins to reveal itself. With this hidden army setting Ai on fire, the woes of the Aites were just beginning. For the city that was their home and earthly shelter was not only being consumed in flames, but the smoke of its fire sent a return signal to Joshua and his fleeing force to stop their deceptive flight and turn in their true strength upon the enemies who had before routed them. When believers do what their Lord directs them to do and do it how and when He tells them to do it, they will find themselves to be participants in plans formed by infallible divine wisdom and performers filled with the Lord's limitless and ever prevailing power.

Thursday, January 26th - Joshua 8: 20-22

Joshua's javelin signaled the springing of Israel's trap. Ai's smoke signaled the casting off of Israel's guise of fearful flight into the wilderness and directed the fleeing Israelites to reverse their course and to reveal their true calling and capabilities as super-conquerors. Now the roles are reversed, as the people of Ai seek to flee from those whom they glibly had been pursuing. But for the Aites there was no escape. The Lord had rightly anticipated their every thought, intention, and move and had accordingly positioned His people as surrounding and immovable executioners of their enemies. Who can stand against or flee from such a God who is for, who dwells within, and who effects His sovereign and prevailing will through His people (Rom. 8:31)?