

2 Generations

**Two stories about obedience and
disobedience, which help us, know
how to enter our spiritual
inheritance**

Joshua 1:1-18 and 5:2-12

Jack Rendel

2 Generations

**Two of the five consecutive stories
at the beginning of Joshua, about
obedience and disobedience, which
help us, know how to enter our
spiritual inheritance**

Joshua 1:1-18 and 5:2-12

"... *cross* ... into the land" 1:2

Jack Rendel

Jaki & Zaki Publications

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**For my parents,
George and Betty Rendel,
who obeyed God, “into Africa”**

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Inheritance: A Commentary On Joshua (In progress)

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Preface

I had a problem with my name! I grew up in Nigeria, West Africa. My real name is John but my nickname is Jack and as a child they called me Jackie. In the area in which I lived the people used the Hausa language. In that language Jackie meant donkey. I wasn't very happy with it. The Africans were very merciful and changed my name. They changed the "j" of Jackie to a "z". The resulting word Zackie meant lion in their language. I was thrilled with the change!

You'll remember that there was a prophet in the Bible by the name of Balaam who disobeyed God. He was hired by the King of Moab to curse the children of Israel. On his way to meet that king an angel of God appeared in his way with a sword in his hand. The prophet didn't see the angel but his donkey did. God caused the donkey to be able to speak and she spoke

to Balaam telling him that he was in danger. (Numbers 22:28)

So this book is written by a “donkey”, about Jesus, who is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. You might pray that as you read this book that God will use the words of this “donkey” to speak to you and bless your heart. If you were wondering this also explains why I have used a donkey and a lion in the emblem for my publications!

The outline found in this book has been the basis of messages I have preached. The book “fills out” the messages for further meditation and encouragement. May the Lord bless you as you read, meditate, study and share with others.

Introduction

Entering The Inheritance

The main theme of the first part, or first division, of Joshua has to do with how Israel *entered into his inheritance*, the land of Canaan. As we begin to look at the first part of Joshua, which covers 1:1 to 5:12, we will see that it contains 5 stories.

The first story and the last, or fifth story, have a lot to do with the themes of *obedience* and *disobedience*. The second story and the fourth, or second to the last story, have to do with *2 facets of salvation*, represented by *two signs*, the red cord that was hung in Rahab's window and the 12 stones taken from the middle of the Jordan River, and piled on its western bank in Canaan. The red cord represented the salvation *from* the destruction of Jericho that Rahab was "looking forward to", and the 12 stones would help future generations "look back"

on the salvation that God had brought his people *into*, by giving them the land of Canaan for an inheritance. God does not just save us from the destruction coming on the world, he also saves us into a heavenly inheritance, today as believers. How marvelous is the Lord. He is so good to us! We don't deserve any of his goodness, mercy and grace but he lavishes it all on us because of his Son the Lord Jesus.

The fifth story has to do with the waters of the Jordan dividing. God told the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to step into the river and the waters divided so the whole nation could pass over. This was the evidence for *two presences*: that *God's presence* was with Israel and that he would "drive out" before them the nations that were *present* in the land. The Lord told his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations but with that went the promise that he would *be with* them (Matthew 28:18-20). God's presence was critical to both events, Israel entering

Canaan, and Jesus' followers going into all the world, making disciples of all nations. Jesus told his disciples at the last Passover he ate with them that without him they could do nothing (John 15:5). They could not do without his presence, neither can we!

Entering the Inheritance, the First Division 1:1-5:12 - Cross...into the land 1:2

On the following chart we have God's "invasion arrow" into Canaan. It consists of 3 elements: obedience and disobedience, signs for two facets of salvation and God's presence to drive out the enemies.

Entering the Inheritance: The First Main Division of Joshua and Its Subdivisions.

I. Entering the Inheritance, 1:1-5:12 - Cross...into the land 1:2

A. 1:1-18,
- Joshua & the people prepare to enter the land of Canaan.
 - The Book of the Law for meditation & **obedience.**
 - We will **obey you as we obeyed Moses**, and the **disobedient** will be destroyed.

B. 2:1-24,
The 2 spies in Jericho.
 - Red Sea was dried up.
 - The Lord is God in heaven and earth.
 - **The red cord hung as a sign.**
 - "The people are melting in fear because of us."

2 Generations

Obedience and Disobedience

Two Signs

2 Facets of Salvation

D. 4:1-5:1,
The 12 stones from the Jordan.
 - The Jordan was dried up.
 - What the Lord did to the Jordan & the Red Sea.
 - **12 stones raised as a sign.**
 - "... that you might always fear the Lord."

E. 5:2-12,
- All the people born in the desert were circumcised and kept Passover.
- All those who came out of Egypt of military age...died in the desert, since they had **not obeyed...**

2 Presences

God's Presence, Enemy Presence

C. 3:1-17,
 The fact that **the people crossed the Jordan on dry land** was how they would know the living **God was among them & would drive out their enemies.**

Two Generations

Obedience and Disobedience
1:1-18 and 5:2-12

Generations of Builders, Boomers, Xers, Net...

I work out at a gym in our town and I was asking the owner when he was born. He said, "1965." I answered, "Then you are the first of the X generation." I remembered that our pastor, Doug Blackwell, had said that he was born in 1964, the last year of the Boomers. Recently I have been reading about some of the characteristics of these various generations in a book by Dr. Rick and Kathy Hicks entitled *Boomers, Xers and Other Strangers*. (*Boomers, Xers and Other Strangers*, Dr. Rick and Kathy Hicks, Tyndale, 1999) They help us see ourselves in relationship to the "generations" around us and give insights as to how to interact with these

“generations”. It is “must reading” for our own emotional survival! The reading of this book is helping me to be more understanding and sensitive as I correspond and talk with a PhD student at one of the universities in Michigan who is in his twenties. As we begin this study in Joshua we come face to face with two very different generations of Israel!

Two Generations So Different

They were different! Joshua must have quietly marveled at the difference between his own generation, who died in the desert of the Sinai, and the young men (and women, 15:15-19) who surrounded him now. Only Caleb was left of Joshua’s generation, those who had made the exodus from Egypt 40 years before. That generation was a crowd of complainers. They grumbled constantly. They had faced some formidable problems out in the desert of the Sinai, and unfortunately, had reacted very poorly to those crises. However, this next generation that Joshua found himself leading was facing its own

challenges, namely the giants, walled cities and chariots of the nations living in Canaan. They were big, well protected and equipped with the technologies of war! Joshua's generation, the generation that left Egypt, had seen God do some awesome things! The Lord's ten plagues had devastated Egypt and a whole nation had been released from slavery. However, that generation which left Egypt, did not persevere through the difficulties in the desert with a positive attitude. They had turned to "bad mouthing" God and their leader, Moses.

Now God had told Joshua to cross the Jordan River at its lower end, at the north end of the Dead Sea. This point in the river was its deepest and they were preparing to cross at flood season when it was even deeper and the current much more powerful. They would never make it across as a whole nation of men, women and children, carrying all their tents and household articles, as well as leading their herds of cattle! They would be swept away

into the Dead Sea by the force of the waters. Why weren't these people complaining about this seemingly hair brained scheme? Joshua's generation would have done just that, but this generation was taking it in stride and preparing to cross. They were definitely different from their fathers!

The “No Way” Generation!

Have you ever had to try to live or work with people who complain and whine about everything? This job is too hard! It's too warm to do this. It's too cold out. I don't have enough money. They don't understand. Why do we have to do it today? You didn't give me enough warning! I can't work with that guy! Our team is too small. The bones of the generation of Israelites, who thought and talked like that, lay in the desert.

The “Go For It” Generation!

The generation, that entered Canaan, was different. The “no way” generation was

replaced by the “go for it” generation! It was unbelievably refreshing! When you live and work with people like this you are literally carried along by their enthusiasm and determination. They say things like, “God is in it”; “Let’s pray for an answer”; “I’m ready”; “Let’s go for it”; and, “When do we start?” Let me say right away that I have often failed in this area and had to repent admitting that I have been more like the “no way” generation and unlike the “go for it” generation.

More Challenging!

Jonathan McRostie is one of the “go for it” generation. It was past midnight on the highway from Madrid to Barcelona when the car he was sleeping in ran head on into a tanker truck. Jonathan was paralyzed from the waist down. Did he have his dismally dark moments? Yes, he did. He went through times that only few can fathom. But did he spend the rest of his life complaining? No! He has worked through pain and impossibilities to emerge with God given strength to

minister to others, and to minister to people in ways he had never ministered before. His wife Margit was of the same spiritual sinew and moral muscle as Jonathan. She took up this new challenge with him, and has become a blessing to so many by her quiet positive attitude.

Jonathan travels, teaches and preaches with so many inconveniences and even accidents. I was with him on a preaching tour in north Italy and was trying to help him in his wheel chair when I lifted his feet slightly and his wheelchair went over backwards, causing him to hit the back of his head on the cobblestones of the street! It was very clumsy of me but he only groaned a little because his head hurt. I was amazed he didn't resort to yelling at me! Don't get me wrong. Jonathan would never claim to be an "angel". I have heard him get upset at a piece of equipment that won't work or is difficult to manage. He along with the rest of us continues to learn God's ways, but his road has been much more challenging than mine!

Part 1.

**A. 1:1-18, Joshua & the people
prepare to enter the land of Canaan.**

**- The Book of the Law for meditation
and obedience.**

**- We will obey you as we obeyed
Moses, and the disobedient will be
destroyed.**

Questions to help in the study of part one, 1:1-18. These questions are to be a tool, and a help, not a barrier to cross. Use as many or as few as you like to help you study the passage.

1. After whose death, did the events of Joshua chapter one occur?
2. Of which generation of Israel was Joshua? Of which generation were the people he was leading?
4. What was Joshua responsible to accomplish?
5. What did God promise to give them? What does this tell us about God's generosity and faithfulness? List two promises of things God gives to us as believers today. (Check out Ephesians chapter one.)
6. What did God tell Joshua would lead to success? Can you and I apply this to our lives? How will doing what Joshua was told to do help us?
7. What did God say to Joshua about fear? What fears do you face in your life and

responsibilities? How can what God told Joshua help you in the face of your fears?

8. Who spoke to whom in chapter one?
9. What were the tribes who lived on the east side of Jordan to do for their brothers who were to live on the west side in Canaan?
11. In the last half of 1:17 the people express a concern about Joshua. What was it? Is this a concern people have for spiritual leaders today?
10. Who was to obey whom? Who are we to obey today?

Chapter 1

Obedience and Success

“Formula” for Success

The first chapter of Joshua mentions obedience in two places. God tells Joshua to meditate and keep the book of the law in his mouth day and night, in order to obey it. God promised that this approach would lead to success. Near the end of the chapter the fighting men, whose inheritance fell to them on the east side of Jordan, responded to Joshua’s command to join their brothers going into Canaan to fight the inhabitants, by saying that as they had obeyed Moses so they would obey him. They added, “Only may the Lord be with you as he was with Moses.”

God to Joshua, Joshua to the People and the People to Joshua

It is interesting to note in the first chapter that God spoke to Joshua. Joshua spoke to the people. And then the people responded to Joshua. He commanded the

soldiers of the 2^{1/2} tribes that lived east of the Jordan to cross the Jordan with the 9^{1/2} tribes who were to settle in Canaan. They were to help their brothers conquer the rest of the land. They were to leave behind their wives and children and cattle. The response to Joshua was interesting. They told him that they would obey him as they obeyed Moses as long as the Lord was with him. In other words they were willing to obey as long as there was evidence that God was with Moses. They were concerned about God being with him and with them.

Two Stories about Obedience

In the two scenes at the beginning and at the end of the first division of Joshua we see God dealing with and speaking about 2 generations of Israel. The present generation was being exhorted to obey God. The former generation had died in the desert for their disobedience. So the first story and the fifth story of this first division are parallel in that they teach

important lessons on the subject of obedience.

These two sections can be summarized in this way:

Joshua 1:1-18. Joshua and the people prepare to enter the land.

*Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to **obey** all the law my servant Moses gave you ..., Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful **to do** everything written in it... (1:7-8).*

*Just as we fully **obeyed** Moses, so we will **obey** you. Whoever rebels against your word ... will be put to death (1:17-18).*

Joshua 5:2-12. The people born in the desert are circumcised and keep the Passover.

*The Israelites had moved about in the desert for 40 years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they **had not obeyed** the Lord (5:6 NIV)*

The Israelites obeyed the Lord by circumcising those who had not been circumcised in the 40 years of wilderness wandering. In obedience to the Lord they also celebrated the Passover.

Two Extremes?

People who get caught up in underworld gangs, especially teenagers are sometimes exhorted to stay away from the gangs and the obedience to those gangs and their leaders. If they don't avoid these gangs, commitment to the gang could well mean suffering, dependence on narcotics and even death. Society in general rejects the authority of these gangs over their lives. This is understandable. Of course, for some people obeying Jesus is going too far

in the other direction. They tell us not to become religious fanatics!

Obedience and Love

*If anyone loves me he will **obey** my teaching (John 14:23 NIV).* These words of Jesus were part of those intimate talks given to his disciples just before his death while gathered in the upper room at that last Passover. Let's think back to the first Passover that ever took place, many centuries before in Egypt on the night in which the Lord brought his people out of that land of slavery. The Lord God brought them out of the slavery of obedience to the Pharaoh and gave them laws from himself to obey. On that night all the first born of Egypt were killed by the angel that flew over, and then and only then did the Pharaoh, in grief over his firstborn son, send the Israelites out of his land. Now Jesus will lay down his own life for them and all who trust him to bring them out of slavery to sin and obedience to himself. He appeals to their love for him to obey him. Jesus is serious about

our obedience but it is based on his love for us.

Obedience and the Holy Spirit

*We must **obey** God rather than men. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who **obey** him (Acts 5:29 and 32 NIV).* The apostles, Peter and John, said this while on trial before the Sanhedrin. Saying it could have been “detrimental to their health” would be an understatement! In fact they were flogged, but they did escape death, which was the intent of many if not most of the Sanhedrin. (Acts 5:33, 40).

*... a large number of the priests became **obedient** to the faith (Acts 6:7 NIV).* As people watched the obedient lives of the early disciples they also obeyed the faith, even from among those who were most opposed, the priests. The impact in Jerusalem was so great that a large number, a great number, of the priests responded in obedience to faith in Jesus

the Messiah. Earlier on Pentecost, 3000 were baptized. Later 5000 were baptized and then at the end of the first division of Acts, at 6:7, a large number of the priests followed. The Jewish priesthood of the family of Aaron, and the other families of Levi, had been established as priests under the Law of Moses. To have the priests accept the message and authority of Jesus was incredible! God was at work. When the apostles were brought in for questioning about their doctrine before the Sanhedrin, they were beaten and warned not to continue. Gamaliel, a Pharisee and respected teacher of the law, rose and warned the Sanhedrin to leave the apostles alone, for if what the apostles were doing was of man it would fall apart but if it were of God they could not overthrow it, and they might find themselves fighting even against God (Acts 5:34-39).

Poland, Chinese, Alcohol and Bicycles

*You are slaves to the one whom you **obey*** (Romans 6:16 NIV). Janek was a slave to alcohol but now serves the Lord Jesus. When a Chinese bicycle factory asked for help from OM Poland worker, Donna, she had no idea what God had in store. Hearing that Donna was Chinese, the factory had asked for help with translation. But the owner was also interested to hear about the work in Poland. Donna, and her Polish husband Arek, shared the story of Janek, a former alcoholic, who now has a ministry among alcoholics thanks to his faith in Jesus. They explained how Janek walks 20 kilometers every day to visit people who are struggling with alcohol addiction.

Soon afterwards the factory owner called again and asked to meet Janek. To everyone's surprise and joy, the owner presented Janek with an expensive brand new bicycle. "We were thrilled with this gift from heaven," Donna said. "Afterward the director shared with us that many workers in his company have a problem

with alcohol and stealing. This man isn't a believer but he asked Arek to help in counseling as well as teaching as he would like to see a change in his workers' lives just like Janek's. We haven't seen such an open door in this town before; please pray with us that God will grant Arek wisdom to handle this request and make His name known among the workers in this factory.”
(Report from OM Poland / North East Europe Communications, 2004)

Appealing!

*Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the **obedience** that comes from faith (Romans 1:5 NIV). ... but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and **obey** him— (Romans 16:26 NIV).*

The obedience mentioned in these verses is not something forced upon the nations of the Gentiles. Paul, the apostles and others were appealing to the nations to

accept the obedience that comes from faith. They were calling people to obedience. The emphasis in chapter one and verse 5 is interesting. Paul said he was calling the gentiles, not to faith, but to obedience that comes from faith!

Even Thoughts!

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it **obedient** to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV).* The apostle Paul speaks as a minister in the kingdom of God who is committed to see victory over spiritual enemies (the flesh, Satan and the worldly system) by preaching the Word of God, praying for people and using other spiritual weapons (see verse 4) to take even thoughts and make them obedient to Christ! Just stop for a minute and look at the people around you. Do you know their thoughts? Do you know their deep thoughts and longings? No, we do not. People often keep those things hidden and never

express them. When we evangelize, teach, preach, pray, fellowship, counsel, and help people we express God's thoughts, which reach into the deep crevices of people's hearts, because God is speaking to them and God knows their hearts.

Have you ever witnessed to someone and they seem so disinterested or even resistant. You felt your words simply slid off their hearts like water off a duck's back. Yet, months or even years later you meet them again and they have become disciples of Jesus. They might even tell you that there was one verse or one thought you left with them when you witnessed that kept returning to their minds, and through which they were saved. God took captive even their thoughts! The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, took captive their thoughts and heart. Doesn't that encourage you to keep witnessing, knowing that God is taking captive people's thoughts which will lead to their knowing God, being saved and obeying God? This also works

for the believer who is wrestling with temptation or has a need to grow in a particular area. The Lord captures their thoughts and leads them into obedience.

Chapter 2

Obedience and Its Object

(PowerPoint, page 7)

Which is Better, to Obey God or to Obey Someone Else?

*This is love for God: to **obey** his commands, and his commands are not burdensome (1 John 5:3 AV/KJV).* God reassures us that although obedience seems hard his commands are not heavy. Jesus said this in another way when he challenged people to “*take my yoke upon you and learn of me*” (Matthew 11:28 AV/KJV). God knows that obeying him is easier than obeying our own passions and desires or that of someone else, or of the devil himself. Those yokes are all heavy yokes. The Lord taught king Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon, a lesson by allowing a foreign king, the Pharaoh of Egypt to conquer him. He had to serve the Pharaoh instead of God. God said that he would show Rehoboam the difference

between serving God and serving Pharaoh. Following is the story, found in 2 Chronicles chapter 12. Verse eight highlights the lesson Rehoboam was to learn:

2Ch 12:1 By the time Rehoboam had secured his kingdom and was strong again, he, and all Israel with him, had virtually abandoned GOD and his ways.

2Ch 12:2 In Rehoboam's fifth year, because he and the people were unfaithful to GOD, Shishak king of Egypt invaded as far as Jerusalem.

2Ch 12:3 He came with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 cavalry, and soldiers from all over--the Egyptian army included Libyans, Sukkites, and Ethiopians.

2Ch 12:4 They took the fortress cities of Judah and advanced as far as Jerusalem itself.

2Ch 12:5 Then the prophet Shemaiah, accompanied by the leaders of Judah who had retreated to Jerusalem before Shishak, came to Rehoboam and said,

"GOD's word: You abandoned me; now I abandon you to Shishak."

2Ch 12:6 The leaders of Israel and the king were repentant and said, "GOD is right."

2Ch 12:7 When GOD saw that they were humbly repentant, the word of GOD came to Shemaiah: "Because they are humble, I'll not destroy them--I'll give them a break; I won't use Shishak to express my wrath against Jerusalem.

2Ch 12:8 What I will do, though, is make them Shishak's subjects--they'll learn the difference between serving me and serving human kings."

2Ch 12:9 Then Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. He plundered the treasury of The Temple of GOD and the treasury of the royal palace--he took everything he could lay his hands on. He even took the gold shields that Solomon had made.

2Ch 12:10 King Rehoboam replaced the gold shields with bronze shields and gave them to the guards who were

posted at the entrance to the royal palace (MSG).

Like Child, Like Adult

As a child growing up in my family one of the most important things I was learning was how to obey. As a parent you are pleased when your children obey you. You feel they consider your word to be important and worth listening to and following. Of course, one of the greatest parental frustrations is when children do not obey.

My parents had the responsibility of teaching me about life and how to live it. Thankfully they taught me about God and read to me from the Bible. Through those readings, through my experience and through their teaching and guidance I learned more and more all the time about obedience. I'll be the first to admit that I failed on many occasions and needed discipline to remind me to obey. My parents were concerned that I not only obey them but also obey God. There would

come a day when I would grow up and become an adult, out from under their guidance and direction. But they knew that throughout my adult life I would need guidance and wisdom from God. I would need to learn to obey God for the rest of my life.

Obedience is a Decision

So in these first stories of Joshua we find the elements of obedience and disobedience. Each one of us will have to make decisions about whether we obey or disobey God. One of the verses I have learned is the last verse in Psalm 19. *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer (Psalm 19:14 AV/KJV)*. This prayer should be our response to God as he teaches us what we should say and what we should think in our hearts. In chapter one God speaks to Joshua in the first nine verses. He commands Joshua to meditate day and night upon his Word. He tells Joshua that if he obeys his Word

that he will have success. He exhorts Joshua to be of good cheer and not to fear. In fact God outlines the four main divisions of the book of Joshua in those first verses of chapter one.

Hang on a Minute! Obedience to Whom?

He was shorter than we other boys but of stocky build. We were frightened of him but we didn't know why. He dominated us emotionally! It was as though he ruled our lives. We jumped at his every whim, complaint, or bidding. You could not relax around him. Life in that dorm room was a kind of inner "terror". One of my friends seemed to relax as he explained that the roommate who caused us so much emotional grief left the boarding school at the end of that year, never to return.

Not an Unpredictable Tyrant

The God who led Israel through the desert under Moses and spoke to Joshua in chapter one was not like the boy described above. First of all this God was far

superior in glory, power and greatness. Secondly he was the God of love who had rescued Israel from slavery in the iron furnace of Egypt. Thirdly he was the God who governed by laws and covenants not by the whims of the emotions. Immediately after bringing them out of Egypt he met with them in the desert, and gave principles and laws which clearly explained his relationship with them, with one another and with the nations around them.

Relationship and Rule

The God who brought them out of Egypt promised them gigantic blessings if the nation were faithful to him, not just obeying him outwardly, but from the heart. He longed for a heartfelt relationship with them. God's rule was a rule that would benefit them, strengthen them and increase them. It was also a rule by law not by selfish, emotional, tyrannical whim! The kingdoms of David and Solomon were a high point in the

nation's history, demonstrating just how much God could and would prosper them.

At the same time it was a balanced relationship. If they insisted on flouting God and breaking his rules he would let them go their own way, which would lead to terrible trouble. The five books of Moses Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy record the facts. In spite of the discipline and punishments that would overtake them, these arrived slowly. God was a patient God. He was slow in unleashing his retribution even when the nation persisted in setting up dumb idols, ignoring his temple and priests, oppressing the widow, orphan and foreigner, and even sacrificing their own children on the altar fires of their false gods! A cursory reading of the Old Testament books 1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah and other prophetic books tells the story of Israel's decline, destruction and deportation to Babylon. God could not play favorites. He couldn't punish the Canaanites and not

punish Israel. The whys and wherefores of obedience to God, who spoke to Joshua in chapter one, were not just sane, they were marvelous! This was not a cringing, terrified nation that obeyed God as they moved into Canaan. They moved into their possession with heads held high and their eyes on the Lord, for he had been so good to them, so patient with their fathers and faithful in his promises to their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God Obeys His Own Laws!

Stop and think about it! The first to submit to and obey the laws he had given was God himself! When Israel loved and obeyed him and even before they did, he loved and cared for them. Wow! God did not bless Israel one day because he felt good, and the next day curse Israel because he had had a bad day. The Lord obeyed the relationship and laws he had laid down between himself and Israel. This is revolutionary! This God is a far cry from the gods of the Canaanites, Hittites,

Persians, Greeks, Romans and many nations in our day!

A Success Story!

In the New Testament we read something that reflects this same reality in Romans 5:19 where the apostle Paul wrote, *For just as through the **disobedience** of the one man (Adam) many were made sinners, so also through the **obedience** of the one man (Christ) the many will be made ready to us (NIV)*. This means that the very first person of the human race to obey fully was Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God himself obeyed long before we obeyed or even could obey. He was successful; we were failures.

You “gotta” start somewhere!

Recognizing that Jesus was obedient first is where we must start. We might be tempted to make another effort at obeying God when exhorted to do so, but that is not where we should start. We need to start by bowing to him who obeyed perfectly.

Jesus is our “Joshua”

The names Jesus and Joshua mean “savior”. He can save because he obeyed. He did what we fail to do. He was successful, pleasing God, but we fail to please him. At Jesus’ baptism a voice came from heaven saying that Jesus was God’s beloved son in whom he was well pleased. So let’s stop, pause, listen and follow him.

Chapter 3

Obedience and Suffering

Obedience in Heaven, Obedience on Earth

*Although he was a son, he learned **obedience** from what he suffered (Hebrews 5:8 NIV).* I think we can safely assume that the Son obeyed the Father in heaven before he came to earth in the person of Jesus. In heaven he would not have suffered as he obeyed. In heaven it would have been bliss to obey. On earth however, he suffered as he obeyed the Father. He learned obedience in a context of suffering here on earth. The reason he came to earth was to rescue us and bring sons to glory, sons who would know the Father, obey him and glorify him. I think we can also safely assume that connected with our obedience to him we might expect some suffering.

Taking Out The Garbage

If you are inclined to obey someone and there is no opposition to your obedience then obedience might be pure pleasure. Hebrews 5:8, however, points out that although Jesus was the Son, he learned obedience by the things he suffered. It is easy to obey when you're asked to "eat cake and ice cream" but harder when you're asked to "take out the garbage".

You see, if God the father had asked Jesus to go to earth to rule over people and do it with an iron fist, if he needed to, that would have been relatively easy. He didn't do that. He sent his son to "carry out the garbage" of our sins and do it by dying on the cross in excruciating pain spiritually, morally, emotionally and physically! This is obedience at the highest level! Only this kind of obedience would answer the problem of a world writhing in spiritual, moral, emotional and physical pain! This is no easy obedience.

Fruitful or Fruitless

Let's go further. This was an obedience which would produce fruit. It would have good results. Jesus didn't die in pain to remain in the grave. He came back to life and gives to all who trust in him the power of his resurrection and of his spirit to obey him, even through suffering. Paul made it very clear what his goal in life was, to know him (the Lord Jesus), the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings (Philippians 3:10).

How do We Get our Next Meal?

Peter Maiden knelt down on the sidewalk next to Pepe Barrios and they asked God to provide the money they needed for the next meal. Peter told us that in the summer of 1968 in Spain they as a team had run out of money. They were going door to door in the towns of Valencia province exchanging evangelistic books for donations to live on, as they witnessed. The books weren't going out. They had no money for food or fuel for the team's Volkswagen van. As they prayed

throughout the following days, slowly but surely, the books began to go out, and money came in. They were learning to suffer just a little bit as they labored for Jesus. In 2004 some Christians in Sri Lanka are learning to follow Jesus as targets of persecution. Their church buildings and homes are being burned down. Some are being killed and others hurt.

I quote a report by Debbie Meroff of how God's people in Sri Lanka are obeying him in the middle of persecution and the Tsunami of December 26, 2004.

Healing the Hurt

A Counseling Team Helps to Equip Sri Lanka's Church

By Debbie Meroff

(Received via e-mail from Gary Dean, January 31, 2005)

"If one part of the body feels pain, the whole body feels the pain," began Ian

Orton at the first Operation Mercy-supported counseling seminar in Sri Lanka, on January 17th. "Brothers and sisters around the world are in pain with you!"

No place or people could be more in need of God's healing than Hambantota. The shock wave that hit this south coast town on December 26th had claimed up to 12,000 of its 60,000 residents--with many bodies never found. Large numbers had been swept away at the Sunday morning market.

The seminar was held at a small AOG church that had narrowly escaped the floodwaters, although the homes of 800 out of 856 families in that area did not. In the same sanctuary the previous August, the pastor had been beaten by (religious) extremists. Some of the chairs were broken and he had been ordered to leave. After the tsunami, the man who was the ringleader of the attack and who lost his wife and two of his children came

running to Pastor Lalith, to beg forgiveness. The pastor simply told him there was nothing to forgive, and wept with him.

Both this seminar and a second one held on the east coast were coordinated through Lanka Bible College. Besides translating a workbook for the sessions, the school provided several top students to work with the team as translators. The four visiting counselors were Bob and Nancy from the Middle East and two men from the UK: team leader Ian Orton (OM), and Wayne Platt (International Teams). Experienced as they all were, they faced an awesome challenge. Every one of the 25 or so church workers who had gathered to learn how to help others were themselves deeply traumatized. The team realized they had to help these men and women process some of their own pain.

During the next two and a half days, participants learned and practiced

listening skills as they shared stories in small groups. On the second morning they took the lists and drawings they had made of the memories that most haunted them, went outside, and placed them in a small fire. As they laid their burdens at the cross and allowed God to take them, the group experienced an almost tangible sense of release. The moment proved a turning point. Participants were then able to go on to learn such things as how to recognize symptoms of stress and depression in others, and how to help non-believers and traumatized children.

Afterwards, the team walked around the bulldozed wasteland that had once been packed with houses. They stood silently by the lagoon where 1,500 had died, and listened to a Bible College student describe how he had tried to pull out 60 bodies trapped underwater in a bus-until he collapsed, weeping. Nearby they saw the crumpled remains of a telephone communications tower that had wrapped itself around another bus, caring 30

passengers.

As he walked, Ian met a young man who shared that he had lost 48 members of his family. Sayeed listened quietly while Ian prayed for him.

One day during the seminar a refugee family of five-mixed Muslims and Hindus-turned up at the church. They told the pastor they had gone to the mosque for help, and been sent over to the temple. At the temple they were told to go back to the mosque! So they had come instead to ask the Christians for help. They were not turned away. The same church is partnering with two other fellowships to rebuild 37 homes in the area: 32 for Buddhist families and 5 for Hindus.

'God didn't cause the tsunami, but he allowed it,' stated Pastor Lalith. 'He has something to teach us through it.'

Seventy men and women attended the

seminar held a few days later in Batticaloa. Two of the team stayed with the pastor, who was still in shock over the loss of his 13-year-old daughter. His family was also caring for 30 refugees.

...

According to Ian, the goal of the seminars was not to train people as counselors, which would obviously take years. The idea was to equip church workers with some practical skills that would help them help other tsunami survivors. Few if any of the participants had ever before received counseling training.

"The churches are doing a magnificent job in responding practically, with few resources," observes Ian. "There is evidence, however, that there is a great need for counseling among those affected by the tsunami, and the church is under-prepared to deal with the theological

issues arising from the crisis. We hope the contribution we offered will enhance the effectiveness of those on the ground who already understand the language and culture of the survivors."

The team has already been requested to return for follow-up training this April, possibly at Kandy Bible College. Besides allowing more focused input on bereavement counseling, this would provide pastors and pastoral workers with a needed break from disaster areas and enable them to get personal debriefing themselves.

"Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul!" remains the cry of many thousands of tsunami survivors. Even more critical than food and housing is their need for hope. Pray that Sri Lanka's church will rise to what is possibly the greatest challenge in its history.*

**Psalm 69:1 AV/KJV*

Suffering Is “Caught” But Not Sought

Have you ever heard the expression, “You are going to ‘catch it’ if mom and dad find out”? Discipline and suffering would come to the child if the parents found out the wrong the child had done. That’s what I mean by ‘catching it’ when it comes to suffering, but I am not implying that all suffering is God’s direct discipline of us for something we have done wrong.

Whether the suffering is relatively great or small, indirectly, by choice or otherwise, it is part and parcel of following Jesus in a world where there are many who oppose the gospel and in a world racked with contradictions, confusion, hatreds and death.

However, let’s be very clear on one thing. Christians are not taught to seek suffering. We’re told it may come, and we are encouraged to endure. We look forward to a future in heaven when we can all obey the Lord in full freedom, where there are

no tears, thorns, sweat or death. Obeying
the Lord will be pure ecstasy!

Chapter 4

Obedience and the Nations

What is the Scope of God's Call to Obedience?

The apostle Paul gives us a purpose statement in his letter to the Romans, chapter one, versus five. He wrote, *“Through him Jesus Christ and for his namesake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith” (NIV)*. Paul was talking here about the whole world when he wrote “all the gentiles”. This is a worldwide call to obedience! All are called to obey! God is not looking for those who will say, “Oh, yeah, I guess I’ll believe in God.” No, he looks for those who will believe in the Lord Jesus and obey him!

Here again we find that worldwide scope typical of God’s mandates whether they are God’s promises to Abram in Genesis 12:1 – 3 or the Great Commission found at

the end of the Gospel of Matthew (28:19-20). If we lose sight of this vision we become more and more like some generations of Jews, and Gentiles, who thought that God's promises and blessings were for them, and them alone. They were not bothered with whether those wonderful things were passed on to other peoples, tribes, nations and languages. It's the ages old problem of selfishness. It's so easy to think egotistically that God is mainly concerned about us, the Americans, the English, the Scottish, the Irish, the Swedish, the German, the Catalan, the Galician, the Argentine, the Yoruba, the Zulu, the Dalit, the Filipino, the Korean and the Assamese. If the Hausa, the Fulani, the Wolof, the Bejas, the Baluch, the Pashto, the Aimaq, the Mazandarani, the Kurd, the Turk, the Israeli and the Arab don't hear the good news about Jesus that's too bad, but please don't ask me to do anything about it! I'm too busy; I have huge commitments here; it'll cost too much; I'm too old to go; I can't leave my family or job; and I could

never learn another language! Hey, I don't want to get on your case. None of us could possibly reach all the world's people groups on our own. Remember it is a team effort. Let's each take a small part as we obey Jesus. When Israel went into Canaan they went in as a very large "team", in fact they entered as a nation. The whole church needs to obey the Lord in order to reach the whole world.

A "Split" over Obedience

What if half of Israel in Joshua's time had said, "Yes, let's go up into Canaan," and the other half had said, "No, we won't go up; we will not obey", what might have happened? The worst scenario might have been civil war, half of the nation fighting the other half. The Lord might have "sent them packing" back into the wilderness for another 40 years. I don't know but it would have been a bad scene!

Sometimes our local churches have splits. It is sad to witness this happen and even sadder to go through a split. Let's face

reality. Splits do take place. Paul and Barnabas split over John Mark as explained in Acts 15. Individuals and groups can differ deeply and divide over opinions, but let us never split apart because one group desires to obey the Lord and the other does not want to obey him. On the other hand, maybe the only good and ultimate reason for dividing is because some desire to obey the Lord and some do not!

As Paul goes on through his letter to the Romans developing his main theme, “The Gospel of God” (Romans 1:1 and 15:16), he presses home the importance of obedience. *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness (Romans 6:16 NIV)?* In the desert of Sinai the generation that was freed from Egypt died in the wilderness because they had become slaves to sin. The next generation

offered themselves as slaves to obedience, entered Canaan and enjoyed God's righteousness. To that generation many things were added to righteousness. They enjoyed fields, fruit, cities, roads, rivers, cattle and the riches of the people who had lived there before them. The principle is the same one we find on Jesus' lips centuries later when he said, *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33 NIV).*

Obedience and the Great Commission

... teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:20 ISV). These words were some of the last words of Jesus given to his disciples before he returned to heaven. They are part of the Great Commission. Jesus did not simply tell the disciples he was coming back and hoped they were okay until he returned. In his last words to them he did comfort them by saying he would be with them

until the end of the age, but he also claimed all authority in heaven and earth and on the basis of that authority gave them instructions to obey! They were about to be engaged in the most serious business ever carried out, the making of disciples of every nation on earth. People around us may question this kind of obedience but that is because they have not recognized Jesus for who he is, the Messiah with all authority in heaven and on earth.

Obeying the Command to be Baptized

When the people heard the apostle Peter preach on the day of Pentecost, they were convicted in their hearts and asked what they should do in response. Peter told them to believe in Jesus and be baptized. In May of 2004 one of our coworkers shared the following story. “While we were away we learned that 6 Iranians turned up looking for a pastor that would baptize them! They had initially flown to another country but could not find anyone

there who was willing to baptize them. When they arrived here they were put in touch with a pastor we work with closely. After interviewing them, he decided that he could baptize 4 of them along with two from his own church! So, back in May a small group publicly declared their faith by being baptized in the sea.” On the day of Pentecost 3000 believed and were baptized. Later many others in Jerusalem believed and were added to the church (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7).

What a privilege it was for me to baptize Manolo Cabreras in the early 1970’s in Granada, Spain, where we were church planting. He was the first to be baptized as the new church came into being. He was a student at the university and we spent several evenings discussing the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ before he took that step of faith.

“Obedience Evangelism”

I have tried to locate materials by George Paterson, a missionary to Central

America, online, but only came up with a very short reference to him by someone else. What I think I remember from many years ago was seeing a manual he had produced on what he called “obedience evangelism”? He emphasized obedience as he evangelized and planted churches. People understood and took their commitments to Christ very seriously. They understood that the gospel was free and yet did not fall into the error of an easy “believism”. Once they committed to Christ it was a commitment, a really serious commitment. It was a commitment to obey Christ. This commitment lines up with what Jesus said in the Great Commission.

Obedience that Leads to Obedience

In Romans 16: 26, towards the end of his letter, Paul comes full circle back to his purpose statement. He wrote, ... *the mystery of the gospel ... but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and*

obey him – (NIV). How can I obey in order to reach the nations so that they might also obey him?

Here are some suggestions:

1. I could invite a person who has returned from a mission trip or for home assignment to tea or coffee and listen to his or her story and *pray for them*.

2. I might give a person going on a mission trip some support gifts and *pray for them*.

3. I could arrange for a missionary to share in my Sunday school class, in the Bible college where I teach, in my local church or to friends gathered in my home, and *pray for them*.

4. I might babysit for missionaries who need to have a date, a night out or must take a meeting, and *pray for them*.

5. I could take missionaries on a shopping trip and give them a gift to shop with and *pray for them*. I know people who have done this.

6. I could mention prayer requests from missionaries at the prayer meeting and *pray for them*.

7. I might say, “Yes”, when the pastor or leadership of the church asks me to oversee the mission board or committee.

8. I could challenge my Sunday school class, youth group or church about reaching the nations.

9. I could pray for and give regularly to missions and missionaries.

10. I could pray for and give to a mission project.

11. I might encourage my children and other family members to become missionaries or support missionaries.

12. I could accompany a missionary on one of his trips to learn about his ministry, and maybe even cover the travel costs of the missionary.

13. As a pastor I could encourage the church to send me or other church leaders to visit missionaries on the field.

14. As a Christian Education pastor in a church I could include missions in the curriculum.

Did I over do it by adding, “pray for them” at the end of many suggestions? I think not! Let’s bathe it all in prayer. The Lord is the Lord of harvest, not us! Let’s go to him in prayer for workers (Matthew 9:38).

As a missionary what can I do to obey the vision of seeing the nations obey the gospel by faith?

1. Pray for the people to whom I have been sent, as well as for other nations of the world.
2. Settle into the nation where I go to live and make friends.
3. Relax and enjoy the new culture. You need to become a citizen of their culture; then they may become citizens of heaven.
4. Don't be in a hurry to see visible results. Planting a church of ten to fifteen people may take eight to ten years or longer. In some highly resistant groups you may never see a church start in your time.
5. Constantly practice the local language; learn the history; understand the humor and the pain; listen and talk with people daily.
6. Don't overlook the senior citizens and the children. They may have more time for you and help you learn the language as you chat with them. This may apply to the

physically challenged or the unemployed as well.

Keep Up The Good Work

George Verwer in a letter to those in the Missions Mobilization Network involved in mobilizing churches and people for missions gives a list of extremely practical points about dangers and guidelines in the ministry. I quote:

“MMN March Letter

We in the Mission Mobilization Network are very committed to the local church. The Acts 13 concept is to see more local churches moving into global missions all over the world and this is happening.

One of the main purposes of our Network is to encourage people and churches to press on and keep up the good work!

I will soon complete 50 years of local church involvement, having had the privilege of ministering in thousands of

churches around the world. I have made some mistakes along the way and have tried to learn from them. As we attempt to mobilize and work with local churches, here are some basics to keep in mind. I will limit myself to churches that are biblical and evangelical.

1. There are all kinds of churches. Try to get as much information about the church and their history. Try to get to know the leaders and especially esteem them highly in love and reality.

2. Watch your own attitude and make sure you move in humility and love with the right attitude. If you have been hurt by a church, or church leader, make sure you have forgiven the people involved.

3. I believe different kinds of approaches and strategies are needed. There are more package mission programs and God can use them, but they don't work in every church. We must always keep in mind what they are already doing.

4. *Try to encourage and affirm what they are already doing. Avoid being critical and judgmental about things that you feel are less than best.*

5. *Beware of creating unrealistic expectations or if you represent an Agency that wants recruits, promising more than your organization can really come up with.*

6. *We all need wisdom as we are facing so many great challenges and opportunities, but also many complexities and problems. Do everything you can to get key mission books and materials into the hands and hearts, especially the leaders.*

7. *Try to have a grace-awakened approach to the whole challenge. The first chapter of my book *Out of the Comfort Zone* speaks about this. I cannot emphasize this too much. Some missions speakers have really switched people off because even in their message there was*

a lack of love, grace and humility. We all have a degree of hostility and anger and we must beware it does not express itself in our message and ministry.

Let's stand before God in love, brokenness, wisdom and in the anointing of God. Please pass this letter on to others.

His

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Chapter 5

Obedience and Joshua Chapter One

Joshua Chapter One

Let's turn to Joshua chapter one and notice how it breaks down into three parts. I have belabored the point of obedience and looked at New Testament references in order to emphasize the fact that whether you're Joshua and Israel entering Canaan or a member of the church today with the task of taking the good news of Jesus to all the nations, obedience is key!

Other references to obedience: 1 Samuel 15: 22; Matthew 28:20; John 14: 23; Acts 5:29, 32; Acts 6:4; 1 John 5:3; 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.

Joshua Chapter One In Three Parts

Here are the three parts of Joshua chapter one.

1. God spoke to Joshua, 1:1 – 9.

2. Joshua spoke to the leaders and to the 2½ tribes of Ruben, Gad and Manasseh, 1:10 – 15.

3. The people respond to Joshua, 1:16 – 18.

You must Communicate!

One of the first realities we find in this chapter is *communication*. Three groups were talking to each other. Without verbal communication obedience does not work. If we are to obey God we must know what he requires. God spoke to Israel often, through Moses and many other prophets. Hebrews 1:1 – 3, says that in these last days God has spoken to us by the Son. In Joshua chapter one God spoke to Joshua.

The prophet speaks!

If God speaks to the prophet or minister, it is then that prophet's job to speak to God's people. That is exactly what Joshua did. Joshua could have kept all God said

to himself but as the leader of God's people that wouldn't work.

Announcements are Vital!

On one occasion after an outreach many of the 100 plus people who participated left for home. A team of a dozen remained at the headquarters of OM in that country. We were all relatively new to O. M. and it was the first decade of the work. One of the men was asked to oversee the small team, which stayed on for two weeks until we all left for the month-long training conference, which launched the year program. During those two weeks things went relatively well but there was one incident, which may have helped us survive those two weeks.

One morning the person in charge asked me why I had not come to the prayer meeting the night before. In surprise I asked him, "What prayer meeting?" He said, "Some of us had a prayer meeting last night." I then said, "Brother, I would have been more than willing to attend if I

had known about the meeting. Did you announce it?” “Well, no,” he said,” “but I thought you would have sensed the burden I had for prayer and you would have come to the prayer meeting.” I was taken by surprise by what he said, but recovered enough to assure him I would definitely come to any prayer meeting as long as I knew about it. I asked him to please announce any that were planned. That situation was not repeated, but then maybe I missed more than one prayer meeting! In order to lead and make certain our team is not confused we need to communicate!

Feedback is Key

In Joshua 1:16 – 18 we hear feedback as the people of Israel respond to Joshua. Some leaders charge off into battle and leave the “troops” behind and bewildered. Feedback from the people can help the leader know if the people are with him, and even more important, with the Lord. On this occasion the people were with Joshua and with the Lord! They told

Joshua they would carry out his commands. They compare their obedience to him with their obedience to Moses. They also told Joshua to make sure the Lord was with him as he was with Moses. They were willing to obey Moses as long as there was evidence that God was with him. Their main concern was that God be with him as he was with Moses. People can have no higher vision. Spiritually they were “spot on”. The Lord, the Lord he is the One! He is our focus! The Lord is the Lord! They pronounced punishment on any one who disobeyed Joshua. Finally they encouraged him to be strong and brave. That is communication! That is feedback!

Joshua, Moses, God...and They!

In their speech to Joshua the people lined everyone and everything up.

1. Their obedience
2. Joshua the leader
3. Moses the example
4. The Lord's presence

5. The punishment for disobedience
6. Joshua's frame of mind.

Backwards

We're moving backwards through this chapter! After the Lord spoke to Joshua in verse 1 through 9 Joshua spoke first to the leaders or officers of the people, then he spoke to the men of the 2^{1/2} tribes of Ruben, Gad and Manasseh. Joshua told the officers to go through the camp and tell the people to prepare provisions for themselves, for within three days they would cross Jordan to go into possess the land the Lord was giving them.

He then spoke to the fighting men of the 2^{1/2} tribes who were to live on the east side of the Jordan, telling them to leave behind their families and flocks in order to help the other tribes take the land of Canaan.

No Grumbling

The past generation had grumbled about going into Canaan to face the giants,

weapons and walled cities but this generation didn't grumble as their fathers had. They didn't complain. They simply obeyed. The Gospel of John 6:61, says, *But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were **grumbling** about this, said to them, "Does this offend you" (ISV)?* Grumbling afflicts God's people from time to time. The disciples fell into this trap. Paul exhorts believers against grumbling and complaining in 1 Corinthians 10:10. *You must stop **complaining**, as some of them were doing, and were destroyed by the destroying angel (ISV).* In Philippians 2:14 Paul exhorts another church about the sin of complaining, *Do everything without **complaining** or arguing ... (ISV).* One of the things we are learning as Christians over the years is to reject moaning, grumbling, complaining, whining and arguing! Recently a friend humbly acknowledged in an e-mail that he was prone to whining about things. I was drawn to him because that is not easy to admit and I know I am not innocent when

it comes to complaining! Instead of grumbling we are supposed to rejoice! In this same letter to the Philippians Paul made rejoicing one of the main themes! In Philippians 1:18 Paul tells them he is rejoicing that the gospel is being preached even by those who suppose they can add to Paul's pain by doing it! This amazing! Paul also rejoices in 2:17 that his life can be spent in service to them. In Philippians there are 15 mentions of *joy, rejoice and rejoicing* in the Authorized or King James Version of the Bible. Strong's Greek Dictionary says these words mean *to be full of cheer!* (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, e-Sword®, Ver. 7.1.0, Rick Meyers, 2000-2004)

Vulnerable

The men of the tribes of Ruben, Gad and Manasseh joined the rest of the tribes wholeheartedly. They crossed the Jordan with the others leaving behind their families to wait for their return. When we stop and think about what they did we marvel! Their wives, children and flocks

would be vulnerable to attacks while they were absent. These people were vulnerable but they believed the Lord would protect their families if they obeyed him. Let's look at the situation from a couple of other angles. First we must remember that they had destroyed the two kings and the army's who had occupied the region previously, so there were no inhabitants there to rise up and attack them. Secondly because they had destroyed Og and Sihon, the two kings who ruled there, the nations around them were terrified of Israel. The surrounding nations were too frightened to attack them.

Who is Frightened of Whom?

When I first started sharing the Gospel from door to door I was very nervous and a little frightened. Sometimes people would not open their doors, would close the doors quickly or refuse to keep talking. Eventually I realized people in the homes I visited were more frightened of me than I was of them. This helped me relax, inject

more humor into my presentation and show more concern for them and their “felt needs”. Even though I felt vulnerable going door to door I realized after many hours, days and months of visiting I had never been hurt, injured or really persecuted in the ministry. What was I so nervous about?

Even when Christians are persecuted that persecution may be motivated by fear! Remember your enemies may be more afraid of you than you are of them, even when they seem to have power over you.

Take Courage!

The train left Bromley South station in southeast England. The ground fell away; the train rode the back of an embankment and over a bridge. I looked out over the homes and in the near distance I could see a large sign on the roof of a pub. The large gold letters on a deep dark blue field announced, “Take Courage”. While I knew very well that this was an advert for an English ale called “Courage”, the sign

reminded me of the Lord's words to Joshua, *be strong and courageous (1:9 NIV)*.

The Lord encouraged Joshua as he took over from Moses. He gave Joshua a purpose statement, *Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them (1:6 NIV)*. Joshua was that one person of all history who would be privileged to lead the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob into the land God had promised them! Joshua's focus, his purpose, his life's work were clear. There is no doubt here. To accomplish great things the goal must be clear and it was. What is your goal or purpose in life? Joshua would lead them into their inheritance. Jesus will also lead us into our inheritance if we are willing to follow him.

Obedience is the Key!

Key to success was Joshua's obedience to the law God had given them through

Moses. While Joshua would receive and seek guidance from time to time regarding different people and situations God had given them principles and laws that were revealed and unchangeable. The Lord created moral, spiritual as well as emotional and physical stability through these laws. It was their foundation for the future.

Day and Night Success

The Lord told Joshua to meditate day and night on his laws. He was to obey it, speak it and meditate on it (1:7-8). The Lord promised him success and prosperity if he faithfully fulfilled these things. Joshua had to obey to set the example. He had to speak it to the people because he was the leader. He had to meditate on it to know it, in order to speak it and obey it. Ezra, the prophet and leader of Israel, did those same three things. He determined in his heart to study, obey and teach the law of the Lord in Israel (Ezra 7:10).

The Leader and the People Obey

Joshua and the people of Israel, of that generation, were committed to obedience. Joshua had witnessed his generation's failure and demise in the desert because they had disobeyed the Lord. Their children with Joshua as leader would obey and be successful!

Let's turn now to the fifth and last story in this first discussion.

Part 2.

E. 5:2-12, - All the people born in the desert were circumcised and kept Passover. - All those who came out of Egypt of military age...died in the desert, since they had not obeyed...

Questions to help in the study of Part Two, 5:2-12. These questions are to be a tool and a help, not a barrier to cross. Use as many or as few as you like to help you study the passage.

1. When did the events of 5:2-12 occur?
2. What contrast is drawn between the two generations of Israel in this passage?
3. What two rituals did Israel carry out in this passage? What did they mean and when were they established?
4. How did carrying out circumcision make Israel vulnerable to its enemies who surrounded Israel? How did obeying this command show Israel's confidence in the Lord?
5. How did Passover remind Israel of God's protection?
6. What does God protect us from today? Find supporting Scriptures in the New Testament.

Chapter 6

Obedience And “Ritual”

More than Ritual!

Now we turn to the last story in this first division, the story that tells us that the generation entering Canaan was circumcised and that they kept the Passover, in contrast to the nation that left Egypt. We turn to this story now, not because it is next chronologically, but because it emphasizes the themes of obedience and disobedience. God initiated circumcision with Abraham, and the Passover with Moses and the generation before the present one, in fact Joshua’s generation.

This generation took very seriously two rituals, circumcision and Passover. But they weren’t just two rituals. They accompanied much faith. These two rituals were two signs, signs given to them by God. They reminded Israel of God and his promises to them, and all he had done

for them. These two rituals in themselves would have never conquered the powerful cities, nations and coalitions of Canaan. This generation of Israel went on by faith to conquer nations!

But the former generation is mentioned here in chapter five and their disobedience is emphasized. They disobeyed and fell in the wilderness.

Adam and His Descendants, Christ and His “Descendants”

*For just as through the **disobedience** of the one man(Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the **obedience** of the one man (Jesus Christ) the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19 NIV).* The apostle Paul makes it very clear that the one man Adam had an enormously negative impact on the human race. He disobeyed and through his disobedience the many, the human race, were made sinners. The second half of the verse gives God’s answer to Adam’s disobedience which made us all sinners.

Jesus obeyed. He entered a world of sinners and temptation on every side but resisted, obeyed and through his obedience the many will be made righteous. It is his obedience that makes us righteous, not our own obedience. Titus 3:5-7 reiterates that it was not our righteousness that saved us but that through his grace his salvation is lavished on us and we are made heirs.

While one generation of Israel disobeyed another obeyed. The reason Israel entered Canaan was because one generation obeyed. While Adam and his progeny cannot enter their spiritual inheritance because of Adam's disobedience, Christ and his spiritual children can because of Christ's obedience.

Disobedience, Witchcraft and God's Patience

... to obey is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22 NASB-u). God gave Saul, the first king of Israel, the command to destroy the Amalekites and all their

possessions. The Amalekites were a nation who wanted the destruction of Israel. Let's remember that they had attacked Israel as they came up from Egypt. Israel had not attacked them (Exodus 17:8, Deuteronomy 25:19).

God had patiently waited over 300 years, through the time of Joshua and the period of the Judges, before he finally brought this judgment on the Amalekite nation. Once more, this is the only time the Lord ever told Saul to carry out a judgment of this nature. It was a very specific and special request from God. Besides this there is no evidence that Saul attacked the Amalekites to carry out a personal vendetta. This was God's sovereign command and judgment. Saul, however, did not obey completely. He saved the king and the cattle of the Amalekites. At this point Saul was rejected by God as king for not carrying out God's command and blaming the people for what he had done and allowed. What Saul had committed was labeled rebellion, and God

told him that rebellion was as the sin of witchcraft! Saul thought he had committed a little peccadillo but God called it something akin to witchcraft!

Loads of Time for Amalek

Once again I am amazed at God's patience. Israel did not attack Amalek and had no inclination to do so. Amalek had attacked Israel. Even after God told Israel to destroy Amalek once they were settled in Canaan, according to Deuteronomy 25:19, Israel showed no inclination to do so.

There is not a shred of evidence in the Bible that Israel held a grudge against the Amalekites. No, Israel was inclined to let them be in peace. The Bible makes it very clear that the judgment on Amalek was from God, not man. And yet even at that the Lord did not bring the judgment on Amalek until centuries later. God gave Amalek "loads" of time to change their attitude towards Israel.

Specific about Amalek

I am also amazed at just how specific God's judgment on Amalek was. I have mentioned those details, down to the last person and all the possessions. What is amazing is that because Saul did not carry out God's command he lost his crown and eventually his life. It is also interesting to note that it was an Amalekite who came to David and claimed that he had killed Saul.

If this were a human plan it would have gone something like this. Saul went out to destroy an old enemy of Israel. Israel had it in for them anyway because they had attacked them in the desert when they came out of Egypt. Saul destroyed the Amalekites and what is more he brought the king back as a trophy! He also brought back the best of the sheep to celebrate their victory over the Amalekites Wasn't that great? Look at the wealth Saul has brought to us with his attack on the Amalekites. In any ordinary human plan Saul would have been proclaimed a folk hero and wonderful ballads would have

been sung of him for destroying Amalek and enriching Israel. God did not see what Saul did in this light. Saul had not followed God's instructions. Samuel was sent to tell him he was finished. God is clear in the New Testament that we are to put to death the works of the flesh. There is a parallel between Amalek and the flesh. The flesh wants to destroy our spiritual life. It wants to suffocate us morally and spiritually. (Galatians 5:16 and 17)

Confessing our Disobedience

Remember that part and parcel of obedience is the confession of our sins, according to 1 John 1:9. When we disobey, we sin. When we sin we are to confess our sins to the Lord and he will forgive us our sins and clean us up of all unrighteousness. When we confess our sins we agree with God that we have done wrong.

As we become more sensitive to our own sins we will want to agree with God and confess our sins. Our anguish at our sin

will also grow. If we are struggling with certain sin we may go through years of anguish. Have we fought with a critical spirit? Are we learning to keep our mouth shut and our tongue under control? Have we determined to keep away from pornography on the Internet only to lust after a woman we see on a movie shown on main channel TV? Have we determined not to ever steal from anyone but cut corners when doing our income tax? Have we allowed inferior material to be used in our company's products and advertised the high quality of our products? Are we quite polite and nice around people at church or in our mission and yet out and about with people in general, get very angry and impatient?

We may find over the years that we are tempted to stop confessing because if we take confession seriously we may tire of doing it. Don't stop. We may struggle with sin all our lives. We will not be perfect until we meet Jesus. Someone has said it

could take 40 years to make a man or woman of God!

The Israelites have now entered the land and fulfilled two ceremonies that the Lord had commanded Abraham and Moses, circumcision and Passover.

Chapter 7

Vulnerable Obedience

Circumcision

The generation that entered the land was circumcised as adults because their parents had not circumcised their children on the eighth day, as required in Genesis 17:10-14, after they were born in the desert. Can we safely assume, that the generation that came out of Egypt, had been circumcised by their parents, while in Egypt? We know that the people rescued from slavery, who had seen God's mighty acts in Egypt, had not obeyed! They had not circumcised their children. What a generation! All those of military age, of those twenty years old and up, who left Egypt, died in the desert because they continually and obstinately disobeyed the Lord.

Vulnerable In Canaan!

We spoke about the vulnerability of the wives, children and possessions of the Rubenites, Gadites and children of Manasseh on the east of Jordan. They now had to believe God would protect them as they lay in their tents until they were healed of their wounds from circumcision. It's hard to believe how hard and disobedient their fathers had been. Their fathers had said that the giants in Canaan would devour their children. This same generation was now entering the land. God used those very children to destroy those giants.

What's more they should have circumcised their children while they could protect their children as they healed from circumcision but they didn't. They had to be circumcised as adults in the land, where their heavenly Father protected them from their enemies, who if they had known of Israel's vulnerability might have come out to attack them. We know this from what Levi and Simeon had done to the city of Schechem, destroying it

while its men recovered from circumcision, according to Genesis chapter 34.

Wounded by God or Man?

As the story of Joshua unfolds we find Israel fighting many battles against the Amorites in Canaan, and except in the case of Ai they were completely victorious. They did not suffer even one defeat, lost no people and suffered no wounds! The only wound the men of that generation were to suffer was the circumcision they went through when they first entered the land, recorded here in chapter five. What is more this wound was small and one from which they recovered, in fact from which they were expected to recover. Does circumcision hurt? Yes. Was it a wound? Yes. Would they be sore? Yes. Would they have to give time to recover and heal? Yes. However, this was not the wound of an enemy that wished you ill will and, in fact, wanted you dead. This was a wound from the Lord. Much better a wound from him, a wound for good and for a greater

testimony than from an enemy that desired to destroy you! God's wounds are good; they have a purpose; they are a witness to him. They shape our character.

You'll Never Make It!

You became a Christian? You'll never make it! You won't survive! I wonder if you ever have heard words like these from your friends? The Egyptians said God would take Israel into the desert and they would die. He could never get them into Canaan! With circumcision the generation that entered Canaan both reached and entered it because they trusted the Lord and obeyed him.

They Did Not Obey

It is so good to talk about obedience especially when we know that Jesus fully obeyed when we could and would not. It's good to talk about his obedience because we know that by his obedience we were saved. It's good to talk about obedience when we realize our obedience is for our

greater good and that our desire to obey the Lord actually comes from him.

But we do have to consider the problem of disobedience. Chapter five, verse six tells us that all the men of military age died in the desert because they had not obeyed the Lord. They were not the first to disobey the Lord. Genesis chapter three tells us that our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed the Lord. God had given them a good world in which to live. As God created the world and everything in it he declared that what he had made was good. Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden with all of its bounty. They talked with God in the cool of the evenings. They worked but without toil, sweat and thistles.

They were given but one rule to keep. They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The law Moses received on Sinai had dozens and dozens of rules and regulations. Adam and

Eve were to be concerned about only one!
But they broke that one rule!

You Meant It for Evil but God Meant It for Good

Later in the book of Genesis we meet the sons of Jacob who became the patriarchs of the tribes of Israel. They became envious and jealous of their brother Joseph. They mistreated him, sold him as a slave into Egypt and told their father Jacob that a wild animal had killed him. In the end after Jacob died the brothers came to Joseph, now the governor of Egypt, in fear and trembling, worried that he might exact revenge on them. Joseph, however, reassured them. He said, *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive (Genesis 50:20 NASB-u).*

Disobedience is a product of human nature. It is ugly. It brings suffering. God condemns it. The theme of disobedience is mentioned time and time again

throughout the prophecy of Jeremiah, in fact it is referred to more often in that book of the Bible than in any other. In Jeremiah's time Israel was sliding down into moral and spiritual bankruptcy. It just got worse and worse. God sent prophets to them but they and their kings would not listen. God had to destroy Jerusalem, the temple, many of the people and pack all the rest of them off to captivity in another land.

The First Passover and the Last of the Manna

That generation entered Canaan and celebrated the Passover, the first ever in Canaan. They were committed to obedience. The day after Passover they ate of the grain of the land. They made unleavened bread. The following day the manna, which they and their fathers had eaten for 40 years in the desert, disappeared. They would never see it again!

Passover was the last meal they ate in Egypt and one of the first celebrations in Canaan. At the Passover in Egypt all of the firstborn had died except in the homes where they had killed an animal substitute and painted the lintels of the door with blood. At this Passover they were reminded again that an animal had died in their place on that night of God's judgment, when the angel of death, wielding a sword, went through Egypt executing judgment. Once again they would escape God's judgment because a substitute had died in their place.

Soon the Lord was to "take the sword of judgment out of the angel's hand" and place the sword of judgment in their hands. He would use them to judge the Amorites whose wickedness was now full. Even at the eleventh hour the Amorites could have called on the Lord to be saved, just as one of their number did, Rahab the harlot, but they would not call.

God has done something similar for us. The Spirit is at war with the flesh in us (Galatians 5:19-22; Hebrews 4:12). He has placed the sword of the Spirit, the Bible, in our hands to use in judgment, on ourselves and on our old way of life, the life we lived in the flesh as enemies of God. Chronologically, it is after this story that the wars of Canaan begin, but in the next book the author plans to write, we will look at the *two signs of salvation* God gave to Rahab and her family, and to Israel and its succeeding generations in the first part of the book. The second part of the book covers the third story found in the first five stories at the beginning of Joshua, and will deal with the *two presences*, the presence of God and the presence of the enemies in Canaan.

Conclusion

We Wonder and Wonder!

She found herself lying at the bottom. She could not move her arms or legs. Her relatives were swimming around her but she had no way to cry out to them that she was lying helpless on the floor of the ocean near the beach. I was reading her words in Portuguese, a language in which I can just say a few phrases. With my knowledge of Spanish I was able to understand the Portuguese relatively well, and the force of her helplessness, panic and terror came through with an incredible impact!

Joni Eareckson Tada begins her book *Joni* describing the accident that “transformed” her into a quadriplegic. (*Joni*, Joni Eareckson Tada, pp. 9-13, Editora Vida 1976) From what we all know of her she is also one of the “go for it” generation, just as keen as the generation that entered Canaan with Joshua!

A question niggles at the back of my mind. What would have become of Joni if she had never had the accident? What would she be doing today? Would she be a testimony for the Lord? Could she have had the same impact as she has today? These questions lift me off the feet of my mind and send me sailing through the corridors of the universe and eternity, unable to land anywhere. Will the Lord answer them someday for us? I get confused as I ask these questions. Do I dare ask? This is ground I don't understand! It seems that having a "setback" like hers has led to greater suffering but also to greater glory! Jonathan McRostie, the European director of Operation Mobilization, was left a paraplegic after an auto accident. Jonathan continued to serve the Lord and was able to reach out to many who suffered. Joni and Jonathan, you both are setting a pace of obedience we can only wonder at, and wonder some more!

A Slavish Mentality

The generation that came out of Egypt had grown up with a slavish mentality. They had lived in slavery and harsh conditions. Life was dangerous. One of the Pharaohs they had to deal with had tried to kill all their baby boys. They had lived in the midst of a people who were also slaves, slaves to their gods and goddesses.

The Egyptians were constantly trying to please and appease gods who were supposedly greater than they were, but were not the Supreme Being. They were gods who were limited, just as the people were who served them. They were not used to dealing with the most high God who dealt with people on the basis of covenants, agreements and laws that were beneficial to people. The difference was enormous between the ever watchful, self-sufficient God, who Israel worshipped, with his instructive system of sacrifices, representing the need and way of atonement to deal with sin, “and of peace-offerings in fellowship at tabernacle or Temple, and those earthly Egyptian gods

of nature.” (*The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Part One*, Egypt, VI. Religion, b. Egyptian Worship, p. 429, K. A. Kitchen, IVP 1980)

Let’s “Go For It”!

Each of the themes found in the first division, “Entering The Inheritance”, 1:1-5:12, are key elements of the Christian life, and teach us, as believers, how to receive the spiritual inheritance God has given us in Jesus Christ. The New Testament speaks to the importance of *obedience*. Philippians 2:12 and 13 tell us through the exhortation Paul gave the Philippian church that we are to obey, but adds that God is the one who gives us the desire to obey. That is encouraging! So let’s “go for it”, just as the generation that entered Canaan did!

An Approach to Studying and Preparing Messages

1. Pray as you read and meditate, asking the Lord to enlighten your mind.
2. Read the whole book of the Bible you have chosen for study 4 times over. If you have read the book recently then read it fewer times.
3. Read the chapter or portion of the Bible book you are studying 2 times quickly.
4. Reread the Bible portion using the study questions given at the end of each chapter of this book, and repeated near the end of this book.
5. Read quickly through the chapter of this book 2 times.
6. Go over the outline at the beginning of this book.

7. If there is a corresponding PowerPoint® presentation accompanying the notes read through it.

8. Begin to jot down thoughts, quotes, Bible references and stories that come to mind.

9. If a diagram would help people see the point, try to draw it.

10. Begin to accept or discard parts of the chapter in this book and add your own thoughts and stories.

11. Look for significant words that are repeated or words that build progressively a theme throughout the text.

12. Remember that even up to the last seconds before you begin to speak or give your lesson, thoughts will come to you. Some of my best stories came to me minutes before I rose to speak.

13. As you prepare remember to persevere even when you feel dry and uninspired. To see a harvest a farmer must plow, disk, drag and cultivate a field. Dragging the disk up and down the field can get long and boring but is all part of the preparation.

14. Keep asking the Lord to help you and give you wisdom. Ask him to help you think clearly about both the Scripture and your audience, and their needs.

15. Use the questions who? what? where? why? when? and how? to bring out the major themes in the portion.

16. Keep in mind the three steps of 1) observation, 2) interpretation and 3) application.

1) Observation is seeing what is actually **written**.

2) Interpretation for those of that time, as well as for us, is the **meaning**.

3) Application has to do with ***living and obeying*** the lessons learned.

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