

JOSHUA, JUDGES, RUTH

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Chapter 1

The Charge to Joshua

The number of times that the Lord tells Joshua to be strong and of a good courage is worthy of note. After telling him that He will be with him even as He was with Moses, and that He will not fail him, the Lord says: "Be strong and of a good courage." (Joshua 1:6)

Then follows the assurance that he shall divide the land among the Israelites. In the next verse He says again: "Only be strong and very courageous." (Joshua 1:7)

Then follows an admonition to do according to all that was written in the law, and to meditate upon it day and night; and then exhortation is again given: "Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed." (Joshua 1:9)

The Lord does not desire that His people should give way to discouragement. The same exhortation that was addressed to those who were about to enter into the earthly Canaan, is applicable to the Israel of God, who are striving for an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan. "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed." (Joshua 1:9)

Why not to be discouraged? Are we not weak? and is not our enemy powerful? Would it not be presumptuous in us to feel strong

and confident? Yes; it would if we depended only on our own strength; but fortunately we have also the same promise that was made to Joshua. It is this: "For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

And He has also said: "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:5)

The Christian should ever realize this glorious truth: "The eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27)

Knowing this, how can he be discouraged? The apostle's exhortation is: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

Holy Things

It is sometimes claimed that there is no such thing as holy time; that is absurd to think that one day is really any better than another; that man can make any day a holy Sabbath by resting upon it. It would be interesting to hear such ones explain Joshua 5:15. The case is similar to that of Moses at the burning bush. Joshua had seen the man standing by Jericho, and had learned that he was the "captain of the host of the Lord. And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua: Loose your shoe from off your foot; for the place whereon you stand is holy. And Joshua did so." (Joshua 5:14-15)

Now did the ground become holy because Joshua took off his shoes, or was it holy before? The answer is, It was holy before, for the Lord said so. Then it seems that there may be a difference between things of the same kind. There was no outward difference between the ground on which Joshua was standing and the ground in other places, yet there was a difference. One was holy, on account of the presence of the Lord, the other was not. The ground on which Joshua stood would have remained holy even if he had not removed his shoes.

So it is with the Sabbath. The Lord has made it holy, and it will remain holy whether man regards it or not. The failure to discriminate between the holy and the profane is that which brings the judgments of God upon mankind.

The Defeat at Ai

In this case it was well shown how dependent the people were on God. When they trusted in themselves they failed. And what was the reason that God was not among them? Because there was sin among them.

And by this we can learn the necessity of the church being pure as a whole. There was only one man in the camp of Israel that had transgressed, yet God withheld His presence from them. So a single individual in the church may, by his wrong course, defeat all the labors of those who would make advance moves.

This also shows the necessity of maintaining strict church discipline. The sin of Achan was imputed to the entire camp, until the offender was searched out and punished. The record says: "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan ... took of the accursed thing." (Joshua 7:1)

Yet there is no evidence that anybody besides Achan was concerned in the theft, or knew of it. The Lord showed by this that he would have his people have a care for one another. We are each our brother's keeper. The Lord has said: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor, and shall not suffer sin upon him." (Leviticus 19:17)

When the church, then, searches out the erring one, and rebukes him, it is doing that which is absolutely necessary to its own existence. Just as a man cannot be said to be sound if one of his limbs is diseased, so the church is not pure unless each individual member is walking orderly. And each person should also consider how much responsibility attaches to his course. By a wrong course he may involve many others in his own ruin; so true it is that "None of us lives to himself." (Romans 14:7)

The Miracle at Gibeon

"Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand still upon Gibeon; and you, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed,

until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. ... So the sun stood still in the midst of the heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." (Joshua 10:12,13)

Some, in their eagerness to overthrow the Sabbath of the Lord, have found in this occurrence a loss of time. But there was no time lost. It was simply a lengthening of the day. If such a miracle should occur on the Sabbath, it would simply lengthen the Sabbath. Two days were not combined in one, but it was one long day. "And there was no day like that before it or after it." (Joshua 10:14)

Skeptics find an abundance of food for caviling in this miracle, as, indeed, they may in any. But the Bible student need not be troubled about it. To say that it could not occur, is in reality to deny that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth; for if God made the planets it is certain that he can control them.

It is said that God instituted fixed laws by which they should be governed. Very true; but did He put those laws out of His own power? The maker of a threshing machine designs that it shall work according to a certain plan; yet he can stop the machine without altering the plan.

One thing is certain: the universe did not create itself. Although the mind of man cannot conceive of its extent, nor fathom the laws by which it is governed, there must be a creator who is infinitely greater than the universe. "He takes up the isles as a very little thing." (Isaiah 40:15)

It is evident that the Creator can do as He pleases with what He has created. If it is asked how it is possible that such a miracle could be performed without disarranging the whole planetary system, I would reply: "I do not know; I cannot imagine; If I could, it would cease to be a miracle."

The disbelief in miracles arises from the fact that men are too proud to acknowledge that there is anything which they cannot understand. He who believes only what he can comprehend and explain, will have a very short creed. It is no shame for man to confess that he cannot by searching find out God. (Job 11:7 Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?)--Signs of the Times, February 1, 1883--Notes on Lesson for February 10--Joshua 1 to 10

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 2

The Strength of the Law

Without doubt this phrase conveys to most people the idea of something harsh and repellent, of stern justice, keen to detect errors, and quick to administer severe punishment. How little such ones know of the law of the Lord! For "this is the love God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3) Since "Love is the fulfilling of the law," (Romans 13:10) it is evident that the law itself is love; and therefore the strength of the law is the strength of love. The law is life,--the life of God,--and God is love. The strength of law is therefore the strength of love of God.

This is made most beautifully clear and emphatic in the lesson before us. Moses was dead, and upon Joshua devolved the task of taking command of the hosts of Israel, and leading them into the promised land. It was a work that might well have staggered the boldest man, even to contemplate it. Moses, the grand old man of all history, was not an easy man to succeed. Notwithstanding all the murmurings of the children of Israel against him, they could not help acknowledging his wonderful ability. It would be most natural for them to make disparaging comparisons if a weaker man took his place; and a stronger man it would be impossible to find.

Joshua succeeded to the command just as the real work was beginning--that of driving out the inhabitants of Canaan, and

dividing their land among the Israelites. It may well be believed that his heart sank at the prospect, and this was the cause of the repeated commandment, "Be strong, and of a good courage." (Joshua 1:6; See also Deuteronomy 31:7,23; Joshua 1:9,18)

It is here that we see the kindly strength of the law.

God's Gift of Work is the Promise of Strength

The promise and the oath of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are referred to as the basis of hope and courage. Instead of saying: "The task of possessing and dividing the land is so great that I cannot do it," Joshua could say: "God has sworn that the land shall be possessed by us, therefore we are well able to possess it," even as he had spoken forty years before. And he could further say: "The Lord has given me the work of leading this people into the land, therefore I can do it."

How natural it is to take counsel of our weakness instead of the promise of God. We say: "Here is a vast amount of work to be done at once, and I cannot do it, because I am weak and ill;" whereas we should say: "I am weak and ill, but I know that I shall be strong and well, because God has set a great work before me, which must be done at once."

God never gives any man work which he cannot do. He does not trifle with His children. It may indeed be that we are not equal to the task; but "our sufficiency is of God," (2 Corinthians 3:5) who

gives us the work in order that He may reveal to us and in us a new measure of His power, and develop qualities in us that we have hitherto lacked. So when a new and difficult task comes to us from the Lord, we are not to think of what we have hitherto been able to do, but of what God wills that we shall do.

The Word of Life

"The Lord our God is one Lord," (Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29) and all His commandments are one law. So the words: "Be strong and of a good courage; Only be strong and very courageous; ... Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage," (Joshua 1:6-7,9) have the same force as the ten commandments given from Sinai. God said to Joshua, "Be strong;" and His words gave him strength. He speaks to us the great things of His law, and as we receive His commandments into our hearts and minds, the righteousness which they require comes with them.

A striking instance of this is seen in the case of Daniel, to whom similar words were spoken. A wonderful vision had been given him, and fear had seized his companions, and they had fled. "Therefore I was left alone, and saw the great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained and no strength." (Daniel 10:8)

Then follows the account of the angel coming to him, and talking with him, and we read further: "And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became

dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth, and spoke, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me." (Daniel 10:15-18)

To You is the Word of This Salvation Sent

The same strength may be ours; for God himself has laid His hand upon us, and says to us: "Fear not; for I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah 41:10)

Here are the same words that He spoke to Joshua; so we know that we may have the same strength that was given to him. We may not have as great a task as Joshua had, but we may be sure that, whatever the work, and however strong the enemies we have to contend with, whether within or without, strength amply sufficient will be given us. Our weakness is not once to be taken into consideration, but only God, who is the strength of our life. He even takes things that do not exist, to bring to nought things that are. "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things

which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

Take notice that the strength and prosperity that God gives do indeed come literally from His law. God said: "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success." (Joshua 1:8)

Compare this with the 1st Psalm. The man whose delight is in law of the Lord, and who meditates in it day and night, has the assurance that he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,--fresh and fruitful,--and that "whatsoever he does shall prosper." (Psalm 1:3)

Yes, there is power in the law of God,--the power of everlasting righteousness, the power of the living God. "His commandment is life everlasting." (John 12:50)

It gives physical as well as spiritual life. "My son, attend to my words; incline your ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." (Proverbs 4:20-22)

This is indicated in the words of Joshua; for the Hebrew word rendered "courage" has the meaning of strength, alertness. The passage might well be rendered, "Be strong and alert;" or, "Be strong and swift-footed;" or, "Be strong and hardy."

The man whose muscles are continually failing him when he wishes to use them, and whose nerves are all unstrung, cannot possibly be of good courage. Mind and body act and react on each other. The work that the Lord gives requires a clear head, steady nerves, and muscles trained to respond to every demand; and it was nothing less than this that God promised to Joshua, and that He promises to every one of us who will literally keep His law,--keep it in the mind and in the flesh. "Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage." (Joshua 1:9)

Who can talk of weakness when God has said, "Be strong?" Such talk is nothing less than mutiny; it is rebellion. If He has said, "Be strong,"--and He has said it to everybody,--there is nothing to be said, except, "Amen; so let it be."

It is the word of creation. God said, Let this and that be; "and it was so." (Genesis 1:7; See also Genesis 1:9,11,15,24,30)

Our part is simply to receive the Word, and to study it, so that we may know how its life manifests itself. "Be not afraid, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you whithersoever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

The same thing is still true. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

How many times we have repeated these words, and still have continued to be afraid, and have been dismayed at the prospect before us. Where then is our belief in God? Shall we not learn this lesson now?

There may be many who will be able to repeat every verse in this Sunday-school lesson; but no one will have learned it, unless he has learned not to be afraid, and how to be strong and well. Then he can say: "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ... Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." (Psalm 27:1,3)--Present Truth, September 25, 1902--International Sunday-School Lesson for October 5--Joshua 1:1-11

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 3

Always Something New; Always Trust

When after forty years' wandering in the wilderness the children of Israel were about to cross the Jordan and go into the promised land, Joshua gave them directions about following the ark, that they might know the way they should go; for, said he, "you have not passed this way heretofore." (Joshua 3:4)

Thus it should always be with the people of God. A new experience should be theirs every day. For forty years the children of Israel had been wandering in the wilderness, crossing and recrossing their path, going forward and backward, and making no real advancement. They were always in the same territory.

It need not have been so. All the progress that they made in all those years they could have made in a few days, if they had believed the Lord and obeyed His Word. Immediately after they left Egypt, the word of the Lord to Moses was, "speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." (Exodus 14:15)

Going back was not in God's plan for them. The work which He did for them that day, in dividing the Red Sea, so that they might go forward, was amply sufficient to show them the power by which they were to advance. They were always to be treading upon new ground, and consequently they would always need His guidance.

Where they failed was in assuming that after one or two experiences they had learned it all, and could manage for themselves; and this is where people are most likely to fail today. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." (Hebrews 11:30)

The people had absolutely nothing to do with the capture of that city; invisible hands had thrown down its walls, without their lifting a finger; all they had had to do was to follow the Lord, and trust. Yet when the next city was to be taken, they thought that they knew all about how to do it. Ai was a much smaller city than Jericho, therefore they concluded that only a few of the people of Israel were needed to capture it. But they had not been that way before, and so as they trusted to themselves, they were defeated.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6) "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

There is nothing so simple but that it needs the wisdom of God to understand it thoroughly; nothing so small but that God's own power is needed in order that it be done properly. Someone will say: "I thought that we were to learn by experience, so that we could know how to do things right ourselves. What is the use of our experience, if we are never to apply it?"

Ah, the trouble is that we so often misapply it. We do not learn by experience. Take the experiences of the children of Israel. What do they teach us? Simply this, that when they trusted the Lord it went well with them, and that when they assumed that they knew how to do things themselves they made pitiable mistakes. That which all our experience should teach us is that "power belongs unto God," (Psalm 62:11) and that we have real success only as we trust Him. We are to learn by experience to trust the Lord. The fact that we go on trusting in ourselves, trying to do things, and failing, shows that we do not profit by experience.

How often after having by the grace of God successfully resisted a temptation, and having gained a victory over some besetment, have we assumed that now we knew how to do it, and have met with shameful defeat the next time. There is no saint so skilled in the devices of Satan, and so experienced in gaining victories, that he can win one alone. Though a man walk with God, as Enoch did, for three hundred years, he is no more able to walk alone the last day than he was the first. He is as absolutely dependent on the Lord for strength to resist at the close of that time as he was at the beginning.

The one lesson which God wishes men to learn is submission, and trust in Him. Only by His power are we kept. Never in time or in eternity can a saint of God stand or walk alone. The true overcomers are those who "have no confidence in the flesh." (Philippians 3:3)

So in Christian work, that is, work that has to do directly with others besides ourselves, why is it not more successful? There are thousands of earnest, zealous souls engaged in it; why are not greater results seen? One great reason is that the workers so often assume that experience has taught them how to do it. It is so easy and so natural to make this mistake. By the grace of God we have some measure of success. Straightway we think that now we have learned how the work is done. We went forth at first in fear and trembling, but now success has given us confidence, not in God, but in ourselves. It is vain confidence.

Only when we realize that the work is God's, and not ours, can success attend us. Consider this: When we think that, having become familiar with a certain work, we are able to do it ourselves, and do not feel the need of such absolute dependence on God as at first, but lean more to our own understanding, is it not plain that now we are going round and round over the same ground? We are making no advancement, else we should feel the need of the Lord's guidance in the new territory.

Does not this explain the whole matter of the little success that attends so much of the work that is supposedly done for the Lord? We have forgotten that it is the Lord's work, and that only He can do it, and have also forgotten that His word is, "Go forward!" (Exodus 14:15)

The Lord has a large place, which He wishes to bring us into. It is nothing smaller than "the breadth, and length, and depth, and

height" (Ephesians 3:18) of infinity. But we have not been this way heretofore; in this vast field we need a Guide constantly, and we may have one. So although you have gained a thousand victories, trust God for the thousand and first as much as you did for the first one.

If you have preached five thousand times, remember that you don't know how yet. In order that real work may be accomplished, the old preacher must go before the people with as great distrust in himself, and as much sense of absolute dependence on God, as he did the first time he ventured to open his mouth.

It is always over new ways, and to fresh victories, that the Lord would lead us. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:4)--Present Truth, October 20, 1898--Joshua 3:4

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 4

A New Way

With the story of the crossing of the Jordan, every reader of the Bible is familiar. But with the lessons to be learned from it there is far less acquaintance. Yet it was written, not purely to excite our wonder, nor to satisfy our curiosity, but for our learning.

If, through contemplation of the Scripture narratives, we lived far more with the events which they describe, we would experience the power of God in our daily lives to an extent far beyond what we now do. We must understand that the Bible is not the record of an age which is antiquated, and can never be paralleled, but of the acts of the living God, who is our God. "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion. The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back." (Psalm 114:1-3)

Or as picturesquely put in the Danish, "Jordan turned, and ran back," as if abashed at the presence of the Lord. The crossing of the Jordan is coupled with the crossing of the Red Sea, and is fully as wonderful an event. There was an exhibition of sublime faith on the part of a vast host, and an example of how to meet obstacles that confront us in the way that the Lord has told us to go. It was the time of harvest, when "Jordan overflows all his banks," (Joshua 3:15) and the river was not fordable. The Lord could have timed Israel's arrival so that they would have found the water very low,

and could have crossed with comparative ease. But God delights in difficulties, that is, in what to us are difficulties; for with Him there is no such thing. He deliberately chooses "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and ... the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ... and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." (1 Corinthians 1:27-28)

This is not for vain boasting, but in order to strengthen the faith of His people, and to induce men to trust in His salvation. If Israel had always gone forward in the power that took them through the sea and through Jordan, no enemy would ever have stood before them; and if we in this day would continually trust in God as the God who always does just such wonderful things, we should be invincible.

When the officers were preparing the people for the great movement that was to take them into the promised land, they said to them: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then you shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that you may know the way by which you must go: for you have not passed this way heretofore." (Joshua 3:3-4)

That is the secret of Christian progress: always treading a new way, a path hitherto untrodden. We must never assume that past experience is sufficient to carry us through any work without special, divine guidance, however familiar with the affair we may

consider ourselves. "It is not in man that walks to direct his steps," (Jeremiah 10:23) no matter how often he has passed over a road. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord," (Psalms 37:23) and only the Lord can keep him from falling in the plainest path. So each day's task, though it may be but the repetition of the same thing that we have done hundreds of times, must be met as an entirely new thing. In that way continual improvement may be made in our work; and that is what God would have. God promises to show us "new things;" (Isaiah 42:9; 48:6) for the work that we best know how to do, He knows how to do far better; and therefore there is always the possibility for us to do far more and far better work than we ever yet have done. "With God all things are possible," (Mark 10:27) and therefore in Him even the impossible is possible for us. With our eyes fixed on God, we have but to step boldly into the raging flood that threatens to stop our progress, and God will make the way. "It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect." (Psalm 18:32)

Did you ever stop to think that the apparent danger to the Israelites increased every minute that they were crossing the river? The water below them was running away to the sea; but to their right the wall of water was continually piling higher and higher, as that from above came down. We are so accustomed to think of the fact that they crossed over safely, that we never consider the danger that they were in while crossing. "Ah, no;" you say, "they were not in, danger at all; for God was holding the waters back." True; and so He is always doing for His people. He measures all the waters of the seas in the hollow of His hand; (Isaiah 40:12) and this is told us as a

reason for quiet confidence in Him at all times. The Israelites were really in as much danger in crossing the Jordan as the disciples were on the Sea of Galilee, or as we ever can be when we are in the path in which God is leading.

What we need to do is to dwell in the secret place of God, who inhabits eternity, (Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 91:1) so that in the midst of present difficulties and threatening dangers, we look at them as already past. That is the secret of strength, and of victory. Our very temptations and dangers and difficulties are made the means of our deliverance, just as Noah and his family are said to have been "saved by water," (1 Peter 3:20) which destroyed the earth.

A Way Through the Flesh

It is "by a new and living way," (Hebrews 10:20) that we draw near to God, though the flesh seems to interpose an impassable barrier. Christ took our sinful flesh, which separates us from God, and veils Him from our sight, and consecrated a way through it, so that we are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13)

No flesh is so corrupt, no inherited evil is so strong, that the Lord cannot make a way for us through it, straight to His throne. Yea, He has made a way: He has "condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:3-4)

With this knowledge we may give "thanks unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

The greater the sin in the flesh, with which we have to contend, the more can the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of God be spread in the world, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

The strength which God displayed in making even the depths which obstructed their passage "a way for the ransomed to pass over," (Isaiah 51:10) is the measure of the strength which He gives to us day by day in our march to the promised land. "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be on their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Isaiah 51:11)--
Present Truth, October 2, 1902--International Sunday-School
Lesson for October 12--Joshua 3:9 to 4:7

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 5

The Taking of a City

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." (Hebrews 11:30)

Who shall say that faith is not a real thing? Here is something tangible, something that we can see, something that appeals to the understanding of the man of the world. A city besieged, and the walls thrown down, is a work that everybody can comprehend. Here was a city that was closely shut up and guarded, so that none might go out or in. Its walls were very high and strong, and there were giants in it. Anybody can see that great force is needed to capture it, and to lay its walls low.

But it was done, and by what means? By faith! The children of Israel believed God, and did exactly as He said, and the walls fell flat. They did not have any of the modern implements of warfare, and did not do anything according to recognized military tactics; but they took a city, and that was the end to be accomplished. No other city ever fell so easily.

What did the Israelites have to do to take this strong city that opposed their progress into the promised land? Only to march and keep silent. Thirteen times they marched around the city, without a word. For six days in succession they left their camp, marched round the city once a day in silence, and returned to their quarters.

On the seventh day they went round it seven times as before, the priests leading the way with the ark containing the law the symbol of God's presence.

There was ample opportunity for the Israelites to become discouraged and disgusted with such a seemingly fruitless mode of warfare. It was a severe test to their faith, but they stood it bravely. And there was also opportunity for the inhabitants of Jericho to recover somewhat from their first surprise and terror at seeing these Hebrews, of whom they had heard so much, before their gates. The long lines of the vast host marching in mysterious silence might well cause them deep anxiety at first, which would naturally increase as the march was repeated. But as day after day passed, and no movement was made to attack, and the besiegers were as far off from taking the city as ever, their fear would give way to mockery at such childish methods of warfare.

But however much the people in the city might jeer at the seemingly useless tramp of the Israelites, the latter were never to utter a word in reply. They knew whom they had believed,--the invisible Leader who had conducted their fathers through the Red Sea and the wilderness,--and they were acting according to the words, "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

In quietness and confidence was their strength. (Isaiah 30:15)

The Climax

At last came the thirteenth round--the seventh march round on the seventh day. Not a stone had moved a hair's breadth in the walls, not even a bit of mortar had been chipped off; but God's time had come, and the power of faith was about to be demonstrated, as a lesson for all time. "And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the Lord has given you the city. ... So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

What is the lesson of hope that we are to learn from this thing that was written aforetime? It ought to be apparent to us; yet most of us have read the record from childhood, as though it were but a nursery tale, and have been none the better for it. We have had hard battles to fight, and spirits of our own to subdue, that meant victories greater than the taking of any ordinary city, and have often given up in despair, although the means of conquest were at our disposal. Shall we not begin at once to act as though we really believed the Bible, including the account of the fall of Jericho?

Our Battle

Our battle is against sin in our flesh; our task is to work righteousness. We read that "with the heart man believes unto righteousness," (Romans 10:10) and in the taking of Jericho we have an illustration and an assurance of the reality of it. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

There is a power infinitely greater than man, all around us and in us; and the putting of ourselves into conscious touch with this power, and in harmony with it (which is faith), will make us invincible. "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matthew 17:20)

What a pity that such mighty power is allowed to go to waste, so far as we are concerned, for lack of use!

Our Assistants

Angel hands cast down the walls of Jericho, when the signal was given; and the same angels are sent forth still to do service for

those who shall be heirs of salvation. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14)

Our instructions are: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:12)

Jesus Christ is one with us, in our flesh, "a merciful and faithful High Priest, ... to make reconciliation for [our] sins," (Hebrews 2:17) and to succor us when we are tried by mighty foes; (Hebrews 2:18; For in that He himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.) and He delivers us by "the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7:16)

Vain imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God are cast down by the power of the eternal Spirit; and every thought is brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. That means that we may have the perfect knowledge of God, which comes only by personal experience of His powerful presence in us; for to know God is life eternal. "And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:3) "He that comes to God must believe that He is." (Hebrews 11:6)

To know the nature and character of God, and to believe that He is,--that He is everywhere present, filling all in all,--is the one thing essential to perfect victory over every enemy,--over the carnal mind and the lust of the flesh.

Our Victory

What must we do then? "Shout; for the Lord has given you the [victory]." (Joshua 6:16)

Do not waste time conferring with flesh and blood, or mourning over the strength of the enemy, or the many times that you have already been defeated. That is nothing to the purpose. Declare in the name of the Lord of hosts that you have the victory, and hold fast your confession. "With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10)

Be fully assured that "He is faithful that promised," (Hebrews 10:23) and that "the power that works in us," (Ephesians 3:20) is able to overcome legions of devils in the flesh. Do not say that you "cannot see how it is to be done." You do not have to see. You cannot see how the seed grows into a plant; yet you know that it is done. "So is the kingdom of God," (Mark 4:26) "[which] is within you, ... as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. (Luke 17:21,26-27)

The farmer casts seed into the ground, in perfect confidence that the power that works in all creation will give him a crop. We are to trust that same power to work in us. If the children of Israel had refrained from shouting victory, because they could not see it,

they would never have had it, although God had given it to them. "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith;" (1 John 5:4, RV) and we are to insist that it is ours, even in the face of an advancing enemy.

Our Weakness No Hindrance

The whole trouble consists in being afraid (that is, provided we really want to overcome our sins), and in considering our own weakness as contrasted with strong temptations. But the battle is God's, and not ours; and our confidence is to be in Him.

The life that we in live the flesh is to be lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us, (Galatians 2:20) and who is so completely our substitute that we can say, "It is not I that lives any longer, but Christ lives in me."

He is the victory, and our constant assertion that the victory is ours, in His name, is what gives us the constant experience of it. If you have some habit that you know is opposing the manifestation of the fruits the Spirit in your life, stop and consider that "you are not your own," (1 Corinthians 6:19) but that you belong to the Lord; and then allow Him full liberty to take possession of His own. Then consider further that Jesus, even in sinful flesh, is without sin because He has "power over all flesh;" (John 17:2) and He has this power, in order to give eternal life and all its power to you "that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this

is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:2-3)

Consider that no temptation, no lust, no envy, no poverty or distress, no inherited tendency, is too strong for Him. Think of yourself, then, as entirely out of the case, as dead, and Jesus Christ as having taken your place; and then think what the result would surely be. That is to "reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:11)

When you have in all seriousness considered thus far, and the truth dawns upon your mind that it is so, then you will not be able to refrain from shouting the victory. You will know that you have the victory over the enemy that is even that moment threatening you, and you will find that this resisting the devil, (James 4:7) steadfast in the faith, (1 Peter 5:9) causes him to flee from you. This is practical experience, that has been demonstrated in thousands of cases. It never fails. "Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:4)--Present Truth, October 9, 1902--International Sunday-School Lesson for October 19--Original title: The Taking of a City. How to Win Victories--Joshua 6:8-20

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 6

Caleb's Inheritance

The time had come for the division of the long-promised, long-sought inheritance of the children of Israel. And: "As the Lord commanded Moses, ... they divided the land." (Joshua 14:5)

Twelve men had been appointed by the Lord to apportion the possession to the different tribes, and among those appointed for this work was Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, the man of faith, who had brought back a good report of the land forty years before, and who had said in the face of opposition and unbelief: "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land." (Numbers 14:8)

When Israel had rejected his testimony, God had promised that, because of his spirit of courage and confidence, he should live, and inherit the land he had spied out. An opportunity was now afforded to remind Joshua of what the Lord had spoken concerning him, and yet Caleb did not act independently, as though he thought his former faithfulness was sufficient to entitle his rightful claim to his inheritance.

The chief men of the tribe of Judah presented themselves with Caleb before Joshua manifesting their interest in his behalf, and placing Caleb's action above the suspicion of being one of mere selfishness, and due to his position among the twelve who

apportioned the land. There is a hint here of the character of Caleb, of his caution, his meekness, and his union with his brethren.

There was no boasting of his former action before rebellious Israel, no coloring of the hard circumstances in which he had been placed when his brethren were about to stone him for his adherence to the right; but a simple, unvarnished statement of the facts of the case. And he said to Joshua, "You know the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning you and me at Kadesh-barnea." (Joshua 14:6)

This was simply to recall to Joshua's mind the reason for the request which he was about to make. He then speaks of how he brought back word from the promised land, and had spoken to the people, "as it was in his heart." (Joshua 14:7)

When his brethren had "made the heart of the people melt," (Joshua 14:8) by words of discouragement, he had "wholly followed the Lord." (Joshua 14:8)

He had followed the leading of God's Spirit, and although the people had not appreciated his action, he had manifested himself before them as a son of God, and the Lord had honored him before His people by promising him an inheritance in the very land they had despaired of entering.

Not always is faith so immediately and signally commended as was Caleb's. And yet, while God had blessed him with the assurance

of His favor, Caleb's faith was tried by more than forty years of waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. He now rehearsed the promise that Moses had made to him: "Surely the land whereon your feet have trodden shall be your inheritance, and your children's for ever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God." (Joshua 14:9)

The people of God had come into the promised possession, and the portions were being assigned. Caleb was in the country of his inheritance. He had only to ask, and the right would be granted to him to go up and possess the place whereon his feet had trodden. What thoughts must have stirred him! What gratitude must have welled up in his heart! He had seen the "fearful, and unbelieving," (Revelation 21:8) a great host, fall in the wilderness, a prey to death as the result of their lack of faith in the God of Israel. But of himself he declares: "And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as he said...and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." (Joshua 14:10-11)

While he had seen that "the way of the transgressor is hard," (Proverbs 13:15,RV) he had realized that: "They that wait upon the Lord ... renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:31)

He had found that in keeping the commandments of the Lord there was "great reward." (Psalm 19:11)

He who wholly follows the Lord, as did Caleb, will have it to say that: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Psalm 16:6)

After this introduction, Caleb was bold to proffer his request, for it was evident that he was simply asking his right as a servant of the Lord. "Now therefore give me this mountain whereof the Lord spoke in that day." (Joshua 14:12)

He then reminded Joshua of what had been said concerning Anakin, the race of giants that the spies had magnified before Israel, and "the cities great and fenced," (Joshua 14:12) that had seemed impregnable to the people of God forty years before; but the spirit of Caleb had not changed. He still had confidence in God, and he declared, "if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord has said." (Joshua 14:12)

Forty years before, Caleb's faith had said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able." (Numbers 13:30)

And now the Lord had brought him to the test. There are many whose faith seems of the genuine order until some trial is brought upon them, and then faith weakens and fails on the very border of their inheritance. Caleb's faith was not of this character. He was no more dismayed at the giants and the fenced cities when brought into actual contact with them, than when they were prospective enemies and hindrances. "And Joshua blessed him." (Joshua 14:13)

He bade him Godspeed. "And Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb." (Joshua 14:14)

This man of faith is a representative of those who shall enter into the land of which Canaan is a type. Those whose fervent faith impels them to act upon His promises shall enter into the heavenly Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, the eternal inheritance of the saints.--Signs of the Times, November 2, 1888--Notes on the International Lesson, November 11--Joshua 14:5-15

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 7

Fleeing for Refuge

When the children of Israel settled in the land of Canaan, they set apart, according to the command of the Lord, six cities of refuge, to which any man who had unintentionally killed another might flee, and be safe from the pursuit of any who sought to kill him in return. Read the whole account in Numbers 35 and Joshua 20.

These cities were well known, and were so situated that they could be easily reached. Once within one of the cities, the slayer was absolutely safe; the rulers of the city were answerable for him as long as he remained there. But if he went outside the city walls during the life of the high priest, he was at the mercy of his enemy.

The story of the cities of refuge is one of the things written aforetime "for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

We find ourselves continually beset by enemies. This is no figure of speech, but an actual fact. Everybody knows that he possesses evil habits and traits of character that are positive enemies to him, often destroying not only his happiness here, but his hope of the world to come. And what is worse, they are stronger than we, so that we cannot successfully fight against them.

From all these enemies, more dangerous than any earthly foes, we have a sure refuge. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

David wrote: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Psalm 18:2)

And every soul may say this as truly as David could.

The 7th Psalm is a vivid picture of fleeing for refuge from a fellow who is seeking to destroy. Instead of "put my trust," in the first verse, read "take refuge," as in the more literal rendering in the margin of the Revised Version: "O Lord my God, in You do I take refuge: save me from all them that pursue me, and deliver me, Lest they tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver." (Psalm 7:1-2,RV)

Of the safety of those who take refuge in God, we read: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it, and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10) "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: He is their stronghold in the time of trouble. And the Lord helps them, and rescues them; He rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they have taken refuge in Him." (Psalm 37:39-40,RV)

This refuge is real. The walls of Shechem and Hebron did not protect a refugee from his enemy so securely as God keeps those

who flee to Him from the sins that beset them. True we cannot see Him with our natural eyes; but we have His Word, which He has exalted above all His name; (Psalm 138:2; I will worship toward your holy temple, and give thanks unto your name for your lovingkindness and for your truth: for You have magnified your word above all your name.) and His Word is backed by His oath. "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:17-18)

Try it. When the enemy presses upon you, lay hold upon the promises of God, and they will be to you a wall which no temptation can pierce. Satan himself in person cannot get through them to lay violent hands on one who is behind them. The God of heaven is infinitely more real, although invisible, than all the gods that can be seen; so His Word is a rock infinitely more real and more enduring than Gibraltar.

And this refuge will never fail. The men who fled to one of the cities of refuge found a welcome and would stay there till the death of the high priest. So we may be sure of a welcome, even though fully guilty, for the Lord says, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

More than this, our High Priest will never die; "[He is] alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:18)

So the soul that flees to Him for refuge, is for ever safe. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27)

Unshaken as the sacred hills,
And fixed as mountains stand.
Firm as a rock the soul shall rest
That trusts th' Almighty hand.

Not rock nor hills could guard so well
Fair Salem's happy ground
As those eternal arms of love
That every saint surround.
--Isaac Watts, Psalm 125, First Part.

--Present Truth, October 10, 1895--Joshua 20; Numbers 35

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 8

A Place of Refuge

There is an idea prevalent, that in the ancient days of Israel everyone was allowed to avenge his own wrongs. People read the words of Christ: "You have heard that it has been said by them of old time, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," (Matthew 5:38-39) and think that in the days of Moses everyone took the law into his own hands, and if one were injured, he gave the other "as good as he sent." Thus they think that it was a crude, barbarous age, and that justice rose no higher than private revenge.

That this is a mistaken idea may be learned from a reading of the entire chapter in which the directions referred to occur. There it is seen that they are given in instruction to the judges; and that the conditions were the same then as now, when there are statutes, with penalties annexed. It is simply the principle of the civil law, that whoever commits an offense must be made to suffer or to pay an equivalent, as nearly as that can be determined. In saying: "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also," (Matthew 5:39-40) Christ was not bringing in any new principle, but merely stating the eternal truth, "Vengeance is my; I will repay, says the Lord." (Romans 12:19)

The Christian law is, and always was, "the perfect law of liberty." (James 1:25)

Just as we must not do a thing because the law counsels us, but must in Christ exercise our glorious privilege of going far beyond what the words of the law can express, so we must refrain from demanding our legal "rights." God is always on the side of the oppressed; and whoever commits His case wholly into God's hands, has infinitely better defense, and greater redress, than if he sought the defense of human law.

The appointment of the cities of refuge, according to the command of the Lord, was in keeping with this. We read that the Lord spoke to Joshua saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for yourself cities of refuge, whereof I spoke unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that kills any person unawares and unwittingly, may flee there: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that does flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbor unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come to his

own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled." (Joshua 20:2-6)

We must not suppose that any friend of an accidentally slain man was privileged to kill the slayer wherever he found him outside of one of the cities of refuge. Far from it. The Lord never planned in any such way as that for the land to be filled with violence. God said that: "Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," (Genesis 9:6) and, "The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." (Numbers 35:33)

But He never designed that this should be done except by the executioners appointed by law; and the cities of refuge were provided as a check on the law, guarding even a manslayer against hasty execution of it.

A beautiful and most comforting phase of the character of God is illustrated by the cities of refuge. They show us that: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe." (Proverbs 17:10)

It teaches that: "The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know your name will take refuge in You." (Psalm 9:9-10) "[He is our] strong habitation, whereunto [we] may continually flee, for He has given commandment to save [us]." (Psalm 71:3)

Who may take refuge in God? "The children of men," without respect of persons; for "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28) "How excellent is your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust [literally, "take refuge"] under the shadow of your wings." (Psalm 36:7)

God made a promise to Abraham, including all who believe, and confirmed it by an oath, "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." (Hebrews 6:18-20)

That is where the consolation lies. Christ is "high priest for ever": "Made...after the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7:16)

The slayer was to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest; but our high priest is "alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:18) "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

Thus God is "our dwelling place in all generations." (Psalm 90:1)

Under the shadow of your throne

Your saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is your arm alone.
And our defense is sure.

--Isaac Watts, Psalm 90, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past,"
1719.

--Present Truth, October 23, 1902--Joshua 20:1-9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 9

Helping One Another

Before Israel had gone up to take possession of their inheritance, Joshua had seen an armed man standing with drawn sword in the pathway; and in answer to the question: "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" (Joshua 5:13) he had answered: "As Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." (Joshua 5:14)

The conquest of Canaan was not to be wholly dependent upon the efforts of Israel or her captains, nor yet was it to be attained without their cooperation. The promised land was just before them, the wanderers were nearing their home; but their inheritance was still in the possession of the Canaanites. They still had to exercise faith and put forth effort in obedience to God's command. But as they advanced, an unseen host went before them, and the "Angel of His presence," (Isaiah 63:9) directed their steps. The people of God were co-warriors with Christ and His angels. And as human faith and effort united with divine power, Jordan parted, Jericho fell, and the Canaanites were vanquished. "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein." (Joshua 21:43)

In all their marches and battles, Israel was borne on, and buoyed up, by an unseen Deliverer. There was no place for pride in their conquests, for it was evident that the Captain of the Lord's host wrought for them, and the shout of the song of Israel was one of

praise to Him who gives the victory. "And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand." (Joshua 21:44)

That it is profitable to serve God, was demonstrated in the experience of the Israelites. They had been delivered from the cruel bondage of Egypt; they had been fed with the "bread of Heaven;" (Psalm 105:40) they had been refreshed with water from the rock; they had been preserved from sickness, pavilioned beneath the cloudy, fiery pillar, delivered from their enemies, and given rest in the land of their inheritance. "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." (Joshua 21:45) "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Corinthians 10:11)

Israel's experience is full of suggestion to the Christian. The follower of Christ has been delivered from the cruel bondage of "gods many, and lords many." (1 Corinthians 8:5)

While Canaan is a type of the rest that remains for the children of God, that will be fully realized in the soon-coming kingdom of our Lord, its conquest has also a spiritual significance in the life that now is. In the victory that must be achieved in banishing the Canaanites of heart, divine power must accompany human effort. We must have the Captain of the Lord's host to go before us, that our enemies may be subdued and vanquished. We must render our

faculties in an unswerving and consecrated service to our God, that there may be a complete government of God established in our hearts. Jesus has said: "Come unto me, ... and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

He is the "Captain of the Lord's host," (Joshua 5:15) and He declares, "There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god." (Psalm 81:9)

Like Israel of old, we have not availed ourselves of our exalted privileges; we have been too easily satisfied with small attainments, with half conquests, and because of unsubdued enemies we have been led into idolatry and sin; but the desire of the Lord has been expressed in the words of the psalm: "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. ... He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied them." (Psalm 81:13-14,16) "Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, And said unto them, You have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you: You have not left your brethren these many days unto this day." (Joshua 22:1-3)

These tribes had chosen their possession on the other side of Jordan, but, having attained their desire, they did not settle down to enjoy themselves, and leave their brethren to fight unaided in

gaining their inheritance. Moses had declared that if they would indeed go armed for their brethren's sake until they too had acquired their possession, then they might return to their homes and be guiltless before the Lord. This is a very significant statement, inferring that those who are content to enjoy their possessions without thought or effort for others, are not held guiltless before God. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18) "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

For about seven years the warriors of these tribes had fought the battles of their brethren, bearing their burdens, rejoicing in victories gained in their behalf. But God had given rest to Israel, and they are now to receive an honorable discharge from an honorable service. Joshua bids them "return," and get to their tents, and to the land of their possession. "And now the Lord your God has given rest unto your brethren, as He promised them: therefore now return, and get unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side Jordan." (Joshua 22:4)

Their inheritance was separated from the inheritance of Israel, and Joshua realized their danger of becoming cold in the service of God, as they would be isolated from their brethren, and could participate in the privileges of the tabernacle only with great inconvenience. He exhorted them to "take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, ... to love the Lord your God, ... to

cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Joshua 22:5)

Then Joshua blessed them and sent them away. One-half the tribe of Manasseh had been given a portion in Bashan. "And he spoke unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and...divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren." (Joshua 22:8)

Their brethren had a share in the conflict both by actual service and by staying with the stuff, and they were to share in the spoil. Service to God is service to one another. There is no place for selfishness in the religion of Christ.

In every commandment that God has given denoting our duty to Him and to our fellow-men, there is nothing required but that which will ennoble the doer, benefit the world, and glorify the Creator. The humble worker who toils in obscurity, aiding the cause of God, is not forgotten before Him and will not be overlooked in the day when the spoils are divided, and the reward is given.--Signs of the Times, November 9, 1888--Notes on the International Lesson, November 18--Joshua 21:43-45; 22:1-9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 10

Who Can Serve God?

The question is not, "Who will serve God?" but, "Who can serve God?" That is a very important question. A failure to understand who can serve God, is the reason why many people continue in useless attempts to serve Him.

Joshua had recounted to all Israel the goodness of God to them and to their fathers, and concluded with these words: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve the Lord. And if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:14-15)

Then all the people answered, and said: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; For the Lord our God, He it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way and wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed: And the Lord drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites, which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for He is our God." (Joshua 24:16-18) That was a good resolution. How shocked they

must have been, therefore, when Joshua turned on them with the assertion: "You cannot serve the Lord; for He is a holy God." (Joshua 24:19)

Only such as are holy can serve a holy God. That is plain enough if we but stop to think for a moment. To serve Him is to do His will; His will is holy; therefore whoever does His will must be holy. An unholy person certainly does not serve the Lord, and cannot as long as he remains unholy; for his unholiness is most displeasing to God.

Are there then only a select few who can serve God? Yes; for all of God's people are "the elect," or the selected ones. Christ says to His disciples: "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain;" (John 15:16) and the number of them is very small compared with the number of wicked. But this does not mean that only a few have the privilege of serving God if they will. "Whosoever will" (Revelation 22:17) may take of the water of life freely; and the assurance is, "to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are." (Romans 6:16)

Whoever fully yields himself, soul, body, and spirit, to God, is accepted by Him as His, and is made holy, so that he can serve Him. Christ has chosen us, that we should bear much fruit to the glory of God. But He says that the tree must be made good, before it can bring forth good fruit. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree

is known by his fruit." (Matthew 12:33) "A good tree brings not forth corrupt fruit; neither does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ... A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil." (Luke 6:43,45)

So when we are cleansed by the Lord we become "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3)

The law of God is the transcript of His character. Wherefore, "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good." (Romans 7:14)

To keep the law of God is to serve Him; but not everybody can keep the law. The latter part of the 7th chapter of Romans pictures the unsuccessful efforts of an unregenerate man to keep the law of God. Then comes the comforting assurance: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:3-4)

So it is not a difficult matter to serve the Lord, after all. Then what about the statement that a good many people try to serve God, and fail? The answer is found in the form of the question: they simply try to serve God, which is something that God has never asked anybody to do; He asks us actually to serve Him. We must do

His will, not try to do it; and to the end that we may really serve Him, He puts His laws into our mind, and writes them in our heart. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:" (Hebrews 8:10)

This is done for all who accept Him as their God, and who fully yield to Him. "His commandment is life everlasting." (John 12:50)

Therefore when His law is in our heart, it follows that it is our life; it controls our actions, instead of our attempting to put it into action. When we yield to righteousness as completely as we have to sin, we shall find that there is a greater power in righteousness than there is in sin; for "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

But in order that we may experience the perfect working of this power we must not be partial in the law, choosing one portion and rejecting another. We must receive it all, and be willing for it all to have its effect in our lives. Thus, with God working in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure," (Philippians 2:13) we shall come to know the blessedness of the assurance, "his servants shall serve Him: And they shall see His face." (Revelation 22:3-4)--Present Truth, October 30, 1902--Joshua 24:14-25

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 11

Choose You This Day

"Choose you this day whom you will serve." (Joshua 24:15)

So spoke Joshua to the children of Israel. They could choose themselves whether they would be servants of God or not, and the same power of choice lies with each of us. The secret of success lies in the use of the will. We can will to serve God, or we can will to serve the god of this world. "To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, [says Paul,] his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." (Romans 6:16)

Every sin is prefaced by yielding on the part of the sinner; and every righteous act is also prefaced by yielding; but in the one case the yielding is to Satan, and in the other case to God. In the moment of temptation, when it seems that we must fall, we may yield ourselves to Him, and in that condition we will not yield ourselves to Satan, for we are controlled by the one to whom we yield ourselves.

And when you yield your will to God, you do not thereby lose your will, for God allies it with His own, which is a source of incalculable strength. And then you will know that: "It is God which works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

(Philippians 2:13)--Present Truth, November 30, 1893--Joshua
24:15

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 12

Choosing

Men were created free moral agents, with the power and privilege of choice; and God calls upon them to choose between right and wrong, life and death. "Choose you this day whom you will serve." (Joshua 24:15) "Choose life that both you and your seed may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19)

There is nothing arbitrary about it--everyone is left free to choose as he sees fit, but it makes a great difference what that choice is, for on it hang eternal consequences.

When Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, (Genesis 25:29-34) he made a choice that he afterward regretted; and even though he sought it with tears, there was no place found for repentance. (Hebrews 12:17)

When the strife between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot became so great that a separation was necessary, Lot was given the first choice; and because the plain of Jordan was "well watered," he chose that, and "pitched his tent toward Sodom." (Genesis 13:12)

His choice was a selfish one, to satisfy present desires; and for a time it appeared outwardly that it was a wise one, so far as worldly success was concerned, but in the end it proved to be the very worst

he could have made, as he lost all of his worldly possessions, and escaped from the doomed city only with his life.

Not so with Moses. Although heir to the throne of Egypt, with every possible worldly prospect before him, "He...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26)

Ah, there is the secret. It is to look beyond the present. The wise man said, "Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." (Ecclesiastes 11:9)

So many today are choosing this world, the pleasures and benefits that it can give, but the choice is a poor one, for all the world can give is only transitory and unsatisfactory. But he who chooses the world to come, like Mary, "has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away." (Luke 10:42)--Present Truth, July 6, 1899--Joshua 24:15

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 13

The Covenant Renewed

The time of the events recorded in these verses was 1426 BC, or sixty five years after the making of the covenant and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. The covenant made at Sinai was an agreement between the Lord and the people relative to the law of God. The children of Israel had come into the wilderness of Sinai and the Lord called unto Moses from the mount, saying: "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ... And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do." (Exodus 19:4-5,8)

This was the covenant; but at this time the people had not yet heard the law; they had promised to keep a law of which they had as yet only an imperfect knowledge. Three days later, however, the Lord spoke His law in the audience of all the people, and again the people promised that they would obey.

"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord has said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord," (Exodus 24:3-4) and the promise of the people in a book and read it to the whole

congregation, and after the people had again promised to obey (verse 7), "he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people," (Hebrews 9:19) "and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words." (Exodus 24:8)

Thus was the first covenant ratified: the people had repeatedly promised to keep the law of God, and God had promised that if they did so He would make them a peculiar treasure unto himself above all people.

But the people did not keep this solemn covenant. Their history during all these years was little but a history of backsliding; and now after they had entered upon the possession of the land promised unto their fathers, Joshua called upon them to put away their strange gods and serve the Lord. "And, [said Joshua,] if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; ... therefore will we also serve the Lord; for He is our God. And Joshua said unto the people, You cannot serve the Lord; for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. ... And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15-16,18-19,21)

We are not to suppose that Joshua intended to discourage the people and deter them from the service of the true God, but he did nevertheless state the truth when he said, "You cannot serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:19)

That is, they could not keep the covenant which they had made at Sinai. That covenant was an unconditional agreement on the part of the people to keep the law of God, but the people did not live up to their agreement; and it will be readily seen that when they broke the covenant, as they did almost immediately when they worshiped the golden calf, they had no more claim on the Lord, according to the covenant which they had entered into with Him. They could not go on under that covenant, for no matter how perfectly they might abide by its terms in the future, the fact would remain that they had once broken it, and that was sufficient to forfeit all the blessings which God had promised.

In fact, the old covenant was no longer of any service to them; they could repent of their sins and receive pardon, but not by virtue of the covenant made at Sinai. For forgiveness of sins they must look to Christ, or we might say to the second covenant, which, though called the "second" because it was ratified after the covenant at Sinai, was in point of fact the first covenant, for it was made with Abraham, (Galatians 3:16-17; Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law,

which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.) and was the covenant under which Abraham's faith was counted unto him for righteousness. "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6)

This Abrahamic covenant is the one "established upon better promises," (Hebrews 8:6) and chief among these "better promises" is the promise of the forgiveness of sins. It was in respect of the promises that the first covenant was faulty. If the first covenant had not been thus faulty, there would have been no place for the second. There was in the first covenant no provision for forgiveness of sins. It was ratified by the blood of beasts, which could never take away sin.

But the second or Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, which "takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

And though not ratified for nearly 1,500 years after the covenant at Sinai, it was "confirmed ... of God in Christ," (Galatians 3:17) to Abraham by an oath. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the

immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:13-18)

This covenant is made concerning the same law; but if people break it, they may by repentance obtain pardon, and so still remain in covenant relation with God. This is a wonderful exhibition of the mercy and love of God.

1. He consents to make a contract with the people concerning that which it is their duty to do; and then,

2. He provides pardon for them when they have not only failed to do their duty, but they also violated their agreement to do their duty.

Surely love could go no further. But some may wonder, "Didn't God know that the people would break that first covenant?"

We reply, Yes; He not only knew that they could not keep it, but in fact, they had broken the commandments, concerning which the covenant was made, before the covenant was made. It was utterly impossible for the people to keep the commandments by their own unaided efforts, yet that is what they promised to do.

Then why did the Lord lead them to make such a promise? For the purpose of showing them their own weakness, and of directing

their minds to the second or Abrahamic covenant, which already existed. This covenant was a covenant concerning Christ, and provided forgiveness for transgression of the law concerning which the covenant was made, and also help to keep the law. And so, when the Lord made a new covenant with Israel, He was simply directing their attention to the covenant made long before with Abraham. And the proof of this is the fact that all who are heirs of the promises are children of Abraham.

Thus it appears that the words of Joshua were strictly true; they could not serve the Lord in the sense of keeping the covenant made at Sinai; they could serve Him only by availing themselves of the help promised in the second covenant, and becoming not only in name but in fact "children of Abraham," by faith in Christ, the promised seed of Abraham. "Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Galatians 3:7)

We would not be understood as teaching that it was impossible to serve God just as well in the days of Joshua as it is now, but that it was impossible to serve Him without the aid of divine grace, and that while that grace was not promised in the covenant made at Sinai, it was given to Abraham and to his spiritual seed both before and after the making of what is called the first or old covenant, and that it was always to be obtained through faith in the promised Saviour.

God's promise to Abraham that he should be a great nation and that in his Seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, was a

promise of Christ; and Abraham so understood it, and it was that faith that was counted unto him for righteousness, and no man has ever been accounted righteous in any other way.

The idea that under the first covenant people were saved by keeping the law, and that now they are saved by faith without obedience, is contrary alike to reason and scripture. God has provided but one Saviour and but one plan of redemption, and in every age the conditions of salvation have been faith and obedience. Abraham was a man of faith, but his faith did not excuse him from obedience. Said the Lord to him: "I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly." (Genesis 17:1-2)

And in describing the people of God down in the last days, the seer of Patmos says: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:12)

As the conditions for covenant relation with God are the same as in the past, so the reasons for serving Him today are identical with the reasons for choosing His service in the days of Joshua. No doubt the people had a deep realization of their obligations to God as they renewed their vows of loyalty to Him. The remembrance of:

- His longsuffering and tender mercy toward them,
- His care that had borne them as an eagle bears her young,

- His solicitude,
- His manifest providences in leading them,
 - in subduing their enemies,
 - in bringing them into the land flowing with milk and honey,
 - in making them the repository of His law, and
 - in revealing himself to them as the covenant-keeping God, the living God who could do exceeding abundantly above what they were able to ask or think,--all this must have given fervency to their response in choosing Him who had only wrought them good. Perhaps, too, the thought of their backsliding, their indifference, their frequent rebellion and transgression, served to arouse them to a more intense determination to walk in the commandments of the Lord.

Joshua presented before them the awful consequences of forsaking Jehovah. To forsake Him and serve other gods means only despair and loss, both now and forever. The Lord describes the condition of those who leave His service in the pathetic words of the prophet, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:13)

And again He cries, "Turn you, turn you...for why will you die?" (Ezekiel 33:11) "O that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Isaiah 48:18)

We were created to serve God, not from constraint, but willingly. No service but that which springs from love is fulfilling the purpose of our creation. Nothing but this can be accounted as service. John writes, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created." (Revelation 4:11)

But it can be no pleasure to Him whose nature is love, to have the unwilling, grudging offering that is sometimes designated as service to God. In all the service of Christ to His Father His language was, "I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

And this condition of true service is provided for in the new covenant. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33) "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10)

Love to God and love to fellow-men measures the infinite scope of the law that is exceeding broad, and that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. In seeing something of the depth of the commandment, we behold our own utter inability to keep it without divine aid; but our weakness has been provided for. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,

condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." (Romans 8:3-4)

While sin has brought us helpless and condemned before God, yet His grace, through the merits of the Lamb of God, and through the might of His spirit, has availed to cleanse and strengthen us, that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" (Romans 8:1) for under the provision of the new covenant, the law is written in our minds and affections. The truly consecrated heart can say, "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light;" (Matthew 11:30) for Christ, abiding in the soul, brings every thought into subjection, and the language of the Christian is like His: "I delight to do your will, O my God." (Psalm 40:8)--Signs of the Times, November 16, 1888--Notes on the International Lesson, November 25--Joshua 24:19-28

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 14

Israel Under Judges

Only a generation had passed since the Israelites had vowed to devote themselves to the service of God. The inspired record declares that: "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that He did for Israel. ... and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. .. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim." (Judges 2:7,10-11)

The startling testimony of history declares that the people of whom Moses had inquired, "What nation is there so great, who has God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great that has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:7-8) forsook the Lord to serve Baalim. The only way that we can have any fair comprehension of the degradation this implies, is to compare the idolatry they had chosen to the sacred and glorious worship they had forsaken. The thought of such depths of debasement following such heights of exaltation fills us with horror and astonishment. It seems a thing incredible. The psalmist, speaking of the requirements of God's service, says, "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts:

and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom." (Psalm 51:6)

The children of Israel had been chosen to obedience. For a time they shone as lights in the midst of the perverse and crooked nations of the world, reflecting the divine image. The blessings of Heaven were for them. But they did evil and served Baal. They forsook their God.

Probably this was not done by a sudden departure. We know how apostasy comes:

1. First it is a conviction stifled, a duty neglected;
2. Then a glorifying of self and a worshiping and serving of the creature more than the Creator;
3. And then a sinking down into grosser and grosser sins till we are corrupted, full of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

Says the prophet of one who had forsaken God, "A deceived heart has turned him aside." (Isaiah 44:20)

They served Baalim. Language fails to describe the degradation, the utter vileness, of the idolatry chosen by the people of God as a substitute for the worship of the Holy One of Israel. The worship of Baal, or the sun, was the most abhorrent of all heathen worship. It was the lowest of all idolatry, with which was connected

licentious rites of the most debasing character. It afforded an opportunity for the display of the carnal nature to the full.

That the worship of the sun was the most abominable form of heathenism, is evident from the words of the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel. While the prophet was with the captives in Babylon, he was taken in vision to Jerusalem, and shown the abominable deeds of the Jews who still remained in that city. He was first shown the "image of jealousy," (Ezekiel 8:3) at the door of the inner court of the temple, and the Lord said to him, "see what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn yet again, and you shall see greater abominations." (Ezekiel 8:6)

Then he was shown "every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall" (Ezekiel 8:10) of the temple, and seventy elders offering incense, and was again told that he should see even greater abominations. Next he was brought to the door of the temple, and there saw the women "weeping for Tammuz," (Ezekiel 8:14) the Babylonian Adonis, whose worship was conducted with the most lascivious rites, but was told that he should be shown greater abominations still. These last and greatest abominations are thus described: "And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshiped the sun toward the east." (Ezekiel 8:16)

The Encyclopedia Britannica, speaking of Baal, says: "As the sun-god he is conceived as the male principle of life and reproduction in nature, and thus in some forms of his worship is the patron of the grossest sensuality, and even of systematic prostitution. An example of this is found in the worship of Baal-Peor (Numbers 25), and in general in the Canaanitish high places, where Baal, the male principle, was worshiped in association with the unchaste goddess Ashera, the female principle of nature."

Have we not marveled and inquired, "How could these people go to such depths of debasement?"

Perhaps we have thought that such idolatry and defilement was a thing of the past, and belonged alone to those of earlier ages. Alas! that this is not true. These things were written for our admonition. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Not man, certainly, for the Lord declares, "I the Lord search the heart." (Jeremiah 17:10)

Let the Spirit of God be grieved away, let circumstances remove their restraint, let it become popular to serve Baal, and who will be like Elijah and the seven thousand who withstood the tide of idolatry? Even now if you could penetrate into the secret chambers as did Ezekiel you would see many who bear the name of Christ worshiping before Baal and Ashteroth. Yes, even in the gates of the

house dedicated to God, the idols of pride, lust, and selfishness are worshiped publicly. Says Paul: "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, ... Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (2 Timothy 3:1-2,5)

Even the professed church of Christ is to be defiled with the lovers of self, and these times are perilous times, for it is a time when Israel is sweeping off into the outgoing tide of idolatry, and only he will stand who is anchored to the eternal Rock. "And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth." (Judges 2:12-13)

Were the children of Israel so blinded that they could not read in the nations the direful effects of idolatry? Did they not behold the image of the earthly, the sensual, the devilish, in those who had corrupted themselves with the gods they had served? Their gods were simply the image of their own debased and ever degrading nature. They bowed themselves down indeed, when they were making obeisance to such idols. "And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers...so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, ... and they were greatly distressed." (Judges 2:14-15)

Again and again it has been demonstrated that: "the way of the transgressors is hard." (Proverbs 13:15)

Every transgressor experiences this bitter result, and yet the slave of Satan is deceived, beguiled again and again into the paths of sin. The children of Israel had been warned. God had set before them life and good, and death and evil, and they made their own choice. They sowed to the flesh, and of the flesh reaped corruption.

But God is long-suffering and plenteous in mercy. His heart of infinite love yearned for His rebellious children, and the next verse after the terrible description of their foul apostasy begins, "Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." (Judges 2:16)

And still they did not acknowledge His hand. Perhaps it seemed to them as an ordinary thing that they were plucked from the power of their enemies, for "they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods." (Judges 2:17)

Again they tasted the bitter fruit of transgression, bringing anguish upon their souls. The Lord heard their groaning by reason of those that oppressed them, and again in the abundance of His pity He delivered them. Israel's course was like the fluctuation of the sea. They progressed to retrograde, and retrograded to return, but at last "they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way." (Judges 2:19)

The Lord had promised to drive out their enemies if they would walk in His ways, but now He declares, "I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died." (Judges 2:21)

But, even in this stern and just sentence, runs a thread of divine compassion, for He adds, "that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein." (Judges 2:22)

God could not give them up. Bad as they were, He saw in them the possibility of purity through the infinite merit of His grace. He would use the nations as scourges to chasten His people, that they might return to Him who could cleanse their sins, and redeem their lives from destruction.

It is thus He deals with us in this season of apostasy; but the day of His patience is fast hastening to its close. Says the prophet: "Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." (Isaiah 13:9)

Now is the time to tear down the idols, for soon a selfish but bitter cry will sound from the fearful and unbelieving, from liar and idolater. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." (Jeremiah 8:20)--Present Truth, August 29, 1895--Deuteronomy 6:5-9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 15

A Wonderful Victory

When God led Israel out of Egypt He took them by way of the sea, and not to the land of the Philistines, lest the people should see war, and be disheartened. "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." (Exodus 13:17)

When the Egyptians pursued them, and overtook them camping by the sea, He made a way of escape for them through the sea, and caused the sea to swallow up their enemies. The marvelous deliverance, together with the wonders wrought in Egypt, in order that they might be delivered, made it manifest that God was doing the work himself, and that human planning or skill had no place in it.

This miraculous deliverance was calculated to strike the inhabitants of Canaan, and of the land to which they had to pass to get to it, with such terror that the Israelites could possess the land without being molested. On the shore of the Red Sea, after the people had passed over, and the Egyptians had been overthrown, Moses sang this inspired song: "The people shall hear, and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling

shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which You have purchased. You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for yourself to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established." (Exodus 15:14-17)

All these things go to show that the Lord did not intend that the Israelites should do any fighting whatever. Indeed, this was plainly stated by Moses, when the spies returned, bringing word that the cities were great and strong, and inhabited by giants. At that time he said unto them, "Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God which goes before you He shall fight for you, according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes: And in the wilderness, where you have seen how that the Lord your God bore you, as a man does bear his son." (Deuteronomy 1:29-31)

Moreover, the Lord promised to send hornets before them, which should drive out the hostile inhabitants, to make room for them.

It is true that the children of Israel did do some hard fighting, but that was only because they did not believe the Lord, who went before them in the way, to search out a place for them to pitch their tents in, and to show them, by fire at night, and cloud by day, which way they should go. And their fighting was all to no purpose. It was

wholly superfluous, and contributed nothing to the ultimate victory, and as we read in: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work You did in their days, in the times of old. How You drove out the heathen with your hand, and planted them; how You afflicted the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, because You had a favor unto them." (Psalm 44:1-3)

After the children of Israel were settled in the land of Canaan, there were numerous instances of God's protecting care over them, showing that if they had only been steadfast in the faith which they exercised at times, He would have continued their victories until, according to His promise, the whole earth should be inhabited only by righteous people; for the victory of faith is righteousness.

A notable proof of this is seen in the victory gained over the Midianites, who were oppressing them. The story will repay careful study, as it shows something of how faith works.

Gideon had been chosen as the one through whom the deliverance should come. The Lord had given him the clearest evidence that he was to lead the people to victory, and this accounts for his confidence. The man who knows that he has received his commission from God, and that God is with him, can do all things. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor." (Judges 6:12)

Then to Gideon's question why they were allowed to be so oppressed by the Midianites, "the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this your might, and you shall save Israel from the Midianites: have not I sent you?" (Judges 6:14)

What was "this your might" of which the Lord spoke? It was not military skill, for he had none. At the time that the words were spoken, he was threshing his father's wheat, in an obscure place, to hide it from the Midianites, who were destroying all the sustenance of both man and beast. It is evident, therefore, that Gideon's might was his weakness and his obscurity; for his family was one of the poorest in the tribe of Manasseh, and he was the least in his father's house. "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

A weak man who has God with him is strong, even almighty. The weakest person, who knows that God is with him, is invincible. All the preparations for the deliverance of Israel from the Midianites emphasized the fact that Divine power alone was to accomplish the work. Thirty-two thousand men had gathered at the call of Gideon; but the Lord said to him: "The people that are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, My own hand has saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying,

Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him depart early from mount Gilead." (Judges 7:2-3)

The result was that twenty-two thousand men immediately went home, leaving only ten thousand. This has a lesson for us. God wants people who are bold because of their confidence in Him. Among the first of those who will have their part in the lake of fire are "the fearful and unbelieving." (Revelation 21:8)

In the conflict with the hosts of Satan we are never to take our weakness into account, except to glory in it, before God. Our weakness is our recommendation.

But ten thousand men were too many for the Lord's purpose, and so the number was reduced to three hundred, a most insignificant army with which to do battle with the host of the Midianites, if the event depended on human might.

God works according to method, however, and we are taught that victories of faith are not won by idleness and carelessness. Trust in God means alertness and the use of every faculty that He has given us. Mark how naturally the results came about through the simple and seemingly unnatural methods employed.

Acting under the Lord's guidance, Gideon divided his three hundred men into three bands of one hundred each. In each man's right hand was a trumpet, and in his left a flaming torch concealed in a pitcher. In the darkness of the night they came to the edge of the

camp of the Midianites, and at the blast of Gideon's trumpet they all blew with their trumpets, and shouted, "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." (Judges 7:20)

At the same time they broke the pitchers which they carried, and allowed the torches to shine out. The terrible din awoke the Midianites, who saw the three hundred men with trumpets, clearly outlined against the darkness. But to their minds the three hundred were multiplied indefinitely, for they would naturally think that each man blowing a trumpet, with a lamp in his left hand, was the leader of a company which might number thousands. So they were seized with a panic, "and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host." (Judges 7:21-22)

Thus the victory was gained without a blow. But mark this: It was gained by men who were fearless and confident. They were "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

They were not frightened because appearances were against them. With the Lord as their leader, they were not afraid to go against a mighty host, armed only with what might seem children's toys. And now remember that: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

Always remember that: "the battle is not yours, but God's." (2 Chronicles 20:15)

It is against Him that the hosts of sin are arrayed, and their assaults on us are really directed only against Him. But the Lord is mighty, and on the cross He has already spoiled all the principalities and powers (Colossians 2:14-15) with whom we have to contend, and our faith in Him is the victory that has overcome the world. "For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

Those who follow Him go forth, "conquering, and to conquer." (Revelation 6:2)

Victory is theirs to begin with. There is no weakness of the flesh, no temptation of the devil, which may not be overcome by everyone who knows and trusts the Lord; for even in death itself, "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8:37) "Thanks be unto God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)--Present Truth, November 20, 1902--International Sunday-School Lesson for November 30--Judges 7:1-8, 16-21

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 16

Comfort in Discouragement

God called Gideon to rid Israel of their foes, the Midianites and Amalekites. Gideon had received abundant proof that the Lord was with him. Yet when he came upon the brow of the hill, with only three hundred men, and looked down on the host in the valley below, "like locusts for multitude," (Judges 7:12) and knew that on the morrow he must meet them in conflict, he trembled. He knew that he and his handful of men were no match for that great army. True, God had said, "I have delivered it [the host] into your hand." (Judges 7:9)

But he couldn't see how, and therefore it couldn't be. In the night season, while in this discouraged condition, the Lord appeared to him, and in substance said, "I know you are discouraged--you do not believe what I have told you. Take your servant and go a little way down toward the enemy's camp, and there you will hear something that will give you courage." (Judges 7:10-11)

Gideon did as commanded, and there he heard one of the men relate a dream he had, which was interpreted by his companion to mean that into Gideon's hand "has God delivered Midian and all the host." (Judges 7:14)

This was enough. Immediately the two returned, and at once set about executing a plan of attack, given by Divine direction, and the

result was that the enemy was routed, the foremost ones were slain, and the whole host was delivered into his hands. (Judges 7:22-25)

How many times in the life of many Christians there come seasons of depression. Temptations press sore; reverses come; the purest motives are misconstrued; the most unselfish acts are criticized; and for the truth's sake, even their dearest friends forsake them. They know that up to this time the Lord has led them--they are sure of it--yet how hard to believe that He still is going before them. They think, as did Jacob, "All these things are against me," (Genesis 42:36) and perhaps murmur and complain. Then right in the midst of their bitterest sorrow and deepest grief, there comes a turn in affairs. The dark clouds roll away, the apparently insurmountable obstacles vanish, and what were looked upon as mountains of difficulty prove to be not mountains at all. And all this, though unexpected, comes in such a natural way, that it never occurs to them that it is God who has brought it all about.

When will Christians learn that in times of darkness they are to look up and not down? Though cast down, they are not forsaken. God's people are more precious in His sight than fine gold, (Isaiah 13:12; I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.) and He never willingly afflicts, even though He permits them to pass through the "furnace of affliction." (Isaiah 48:10)

Even here He suffers none to be tempted above that they are able to bear. Says the apostle: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

Now anyone would undergo, without a murmur, the pain of the surgeon's knife, if he knew that it was the only means of saving his life. So when Christians, in their experience, actually know this truth, how easy it becomes to bear the severest trials; and not only to bear them, but even welcome them, for it is only through "much tribulation" (Acts 14:22; We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.) that anyone can be fitted for eternal life.

So hereafter can we not all say with the poet:

Let good or ill befall,
It must be good for me,
Secure of having Thee in all,
Of having all in Thee.

--Henry Francis Lyte, My Spirit on Thy Care, paraphrase of
Psalm 31, 1834.

--Present Truth, March 29, 1900--Judges 7:9

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 17

Meat From the Eater

Have we yet read the hidden meaning of Samson's riddle? "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." (Judges 14:14)

We know the story: A young lion came forth and roared against Samson. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent it as though it had been a kid. Some time afterward passing the spot, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and found in it a swarm of bees and a honey-comb, with which he refreshed himself and his parents. The lion that roared against him was the means of providing him with a sweet repast. "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

But if we meet him in the strength of the Lord, we shall be more than conquerors, and get blessing and help from all his attacks. From the eater comes meat, from the strong, sweetness. "My brethren count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations," (James 1:2) even though you be in heaviness through them, (1 Peter 1:6) for: "Though no chastening for the present seems to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 12:11)

Not only are we ourselves fed and strengthened by our temptations, our tribulations, our difficulties, and our labors, but we

thus receive a supply from which we can minister to the needs of others. "Blessed be God, ... Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Thus may our tribulation be to us as a passport by which we may in some degree enter into the joy of our Lord, "by whose stripes we are healed." (1 Peter 2:24)--Present Truth, March 26, 1903--Judges 14:14

E.J. Waggoner

Chapter 18

An Israelite Indeed

Of all the people who set themselves in opposition to the children of Israel on the way from Egypt to Canaan, there were none more diabolical than the people of Moab. It was Balak, king of Moab, who called Balaam, saying: "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: Come now therefore, I pray you, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me; peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land." (Numbers 22:5-6)

Although this purpose failed, and Balaam was constrained to bless when he opened his mouth to curse, the Lord assured the king of Moab, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." (Numbers 23:23)

Nevertheless the Moabites proved a snare and a curse to the children of Israel; for, acting on the advice of Balaam, the Moabites seduced the Israelites in the most flagrant and disgraceful heaven-defying sin. (See Numbers 25, and 31:16) Thus the curse did come upon Israel through Moab, after all, and many were destroyed.

The unscrupulous, lewd, and vicious character of the Moabites is plainly revealed in the narrative to which we have referred. It was, indeed, quite in keeping with their origin. That they were idolaters,

appears from Numbers 25:1-2, where we are told that they called the Israelites unto the sacrifices of their gods, "and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." (Numbers 25:2)

From all this we see that the people of Moab were as distinct from Israel, and as much opposed to them, and unlike the people of God, as it was possible for any people to be.

It was to the country of this people that many years later, when Israel had long been dwelling in the land of Canaan, a man from Bethlehem came with his wife and two sons. Famine had driven them from their home, but even though there was bread among the Moabites, the man found among them the death which he feared in his native country, and his wife Naomi was left a widow with two sons. The sons married Moabitish women but soon died; and the mother, left with only her two daughters-in-law, determined to return to the land of Israel; "for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread." (Ruth 1:6)

Both the daughters-in-law of Naomi started with her as she took her journey back to Canaan; but one of them, Orpah, was soon convinced that it was the wisest policy for her to remain among her own people. "And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her." (Ruth 1:14)

Then Naomi said to Ruth, "Behold, your sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods; return after your sister-in-law." (Ruth 1:15)

And then the loving loyalty of Ruth shone out in the words so well known: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you; for where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16)

The story that follows is as romantic as could be imagined, but it is nevertheless a sober history. We do not need to dwell upon it in its details, for anybody can read it in a few minutes. What interests us mostly at present is the outcome. Ruth, who forsook her native country and its gods, to dwell among a people whom she had not known before, and to trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel, (Ruth 2:12) married Boaz, a God-fearing man of Bethlehem, and bore a son, "And they called his name Obed; and he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." (Ruth 4:17)

Thus in a few words we have the story of the progress from idolatry to the worship of the true God,--from a daughter of a Gentile race to a mother in Israel; and in this we have a complete revelation of who constitute Israel, and of how that people is built up. Even as it was the victory of faith that gave Jacob, the supplanter, the name Israel, so it is by faith that the house of Israel is built up. "Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Galatians 3:7) "Jesus Christ [is] the

Son of David," (Matthew 1:1) "according to the flesh." (Romans 1:3)

And David, whose name stands for Israel since it is from him that the King comes who is to rule over the house of Jacob for ever, (See Luke 1:31-33) was directly descended from Ruth, the Moabitess. Not only may one by faith become a member of Israel, and a sharer in the blessings pronounced upon that people, but steadfast faith constitutes one a head of the nation. So we see that Israel is a people whose sole characteristic is faith, and the righteousness which springs from it.--Present Truth, November 27, 1902--International Sunday-school Lesson for December 7--Ruth 1:16-22

E.J. Waggoner