

Israel on the border of Canaan

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I would like to turn to a portion from the Old Testament, this evening, from the book of Joshua, chapter 1. The book of Joshua, chapter 1, verse 1.

Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses, my servant, is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all these people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, [00:01:03] all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea, to what the going down of the sun shall be your coast.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage, for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant, commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

This book of the law shall not be part of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. [00:02:04] If not I commanded thee, be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

And a few verses from chapter 7, Joshua chapter 7, verse 1.

But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing. For Achan the son of Cami, the son of Zepti, the son of Zerah, the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-Avon, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the

country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said unto him, Let not all the people go up, but let [00:03:03] about 2,000 or 3,000 men go up and smite Ai, and make not all the people to labor thither, for they are but few. So they went up thither of the people about 3,000 men, and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about 36 men, for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down, wherefore the hearts of the people melted and became as water." Well, dear brethren, we all know that the Old Testament is a book that contains numerous illustrations of New Testament truth, and illustrations concerning our walk of faith.

The history of the earthly people of God, the history of Israel, whom God rescued from [00:04:06] Egypt and brought them through the wilderness into the land of Canaan, is an illustration of the life of the believer who has been saved from the power of Satan from Egypt, who is guided through the wilderness, and who also is in that land of Canaan.

Here in the book of Joshua, we are just at the point when Israel should go and enter the land of Canaan. Israel, of course, was in the wilderness before they went into the land of Canaan.

In our spiritual experience, these are two things we experience at the same time, not necessarily the same moment, but while we are here on earth. Canaan does not speak to us of the Father's house, the place where we will be when our [00:05:08] journey down here is finished, because when the Lord comes, as we have studied these past days, and the rapture is there, and we are brought into the Father's house, there is no more fighting.

Now the book of Joshua speaks about that which in the New Testament we find in the epistle to the Ephesians about the heavenly places. And there in the book of Ephesians you will find that fighting has to be done, because the enemy wants to rob us that we may be occupied with these heavenly blessings.

We are blessed with all heavenly blessings, with all blessings in heavenly places, says Ephesians.

Well, I remember when I was young, the brethren were discussing these things, but nobody really [00:06:03] said what heavenly blessings were.

Some time ago, some young people came to me after the meeting and asked the same question. You have all the time been talking about that we are blessed with heavenly blessings, but what are these heavenly blessings? Well, if you want to put it quite simply, we could say all the blessings which are ours because we are Christians.

Our typically Christian blessings, there are other blessings in our lives. For example, if we are healthy, sitting here, and are not ill, this is a blessing.

But it is not something specially Christian. Or if we have enough to eat, and are not poor and starving, this is a special blessing of the Creator of God, but not something specially Christian. But there are blessings that have to do with our salvation and with all the things we have [00:07:05] in Christ.

These are these heavenly blessings, and God wants us to enjoy these things, and Satan wants to hinder us in the enjoyment.

In the beginning of the book of Joshua, God says, after the death of Moses, to Joshua, who was the new leader of the people of Israel, Moses, my servant is dead.

We have a very practical point here. In the history of the people of God, there are men who have, in a special way, been used by the Lord to lead and guide the people of God, faithful servants, but they get older, and there is a time when the Lord takes them away.

[00:08:04] The people might say, well, we would need them.

But as somebody has said, God is burying his workers, but he is not burying his work. The work goes on, and if God says, my servant is dead, he says to Joshua, therefore arise.

So if the Lord takes away some of the older servants, maybe we are looking around if there is somebody else who can step in.

We should be listening carefully. Maybe the Lord is saying to you and me, arise, go. Now you have to stand into the breach. We have spoken about this, being baptized for the dead, stepping in for those that have left. I just mentioned in passing how wonderful it is that God says, my Moses, my servant is dead.

[00:09:05] We all know the end of Moses. He was not allowed to enter the country in the government of God. But at the end, God says, this man was my servant.

He served me, but now, Joshua, it's your turn.

Therefore arise.

Go over this Jordan, thou and all these people, unto the land which I do give to them, to the children of Israel.

Now the Spirit of God is showing us the two sides in connection with this blessing of God. The first thing is that God says to Israel, you shall go into this land that I have given you.

God had given them the land. There was no doubt about that. They had not done one step into the country when God says, I have given you the land. And that's what Ephesians says. [00:10:02] We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. That's true of every believer, if he knows it or not. But that is only one side of the picture, that on God's side, everything is done.

He has blessed us. He has given us the country, the land. But then he says in the next verse, every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon that I have given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

God says, Joshua, I have given you all the land, but you have to take possession of it. You have put your foot on it. You will only possess as much as you take possession of.

And as we know, Israel has never possessed all the land in the way God had given it to them.

And it's the same in spiritual ways. We only enjoy those things and have the benefit of them if we put our foot on them, so to say. [00:11:07] If we take possession of them. God has given us all these

things, all these blessings, but we have to take possession of them.

I have given it to you, says God, but now Moses, you have to go. And that's what God wants to tell us. We have to be occupied with these things, with our Christian blessings, with the truth of the Word of God. We have to put our foot on it, to take possession of it.

That's what we have to do. We will see later on how God puts this on the heart of Joshua, that they should take possession of the land. And how much do we have taken possession of the truth of God?

We have, in His Word, all these blessings. How much do we know about them?

That's exactly what Ephesians also writes about, this side, in Ephesians chapter 1.

[00:12:08] There is a verse where Paul says, in verse 18 of Ephesians 1, The eyes of your understanding be an enlightenment that he may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us.

God wants us to know these things He has given us, that our understanding might be enlightened. Last night in Canterbury, we heard about a darkened understanding in the unbelievers. We have an enlightened understanding so that we should know these things. Paul was writing to the Philippians, not just to say, well, that's it, that's what God has done. But it was His desire that they should know these things, have an understanding of them. [00:13:04] I have given you the lands, God said to Joshua.

In verse 4, God describes the borders of the land, from the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, and the land of the Hittites, unto the great sea. This land was surrounded by a great wilderness, a great mountain, a great river, and a great sea.

And all these speak in a picture of the world.

Just that which is not the Christian's inheritance. He has his land, his inheritance, and there is a border where God says, well, that is not what I've given you.

That is the border. You should not cross that. The wilderness speaks of the world in its spiritual barrenness, where you can't find [00:14:03] anything for your soul.

And the Lebanon, this great mountain, speaks of the worldly glory.

These two things exist next to each other. On the one hand, the world is a barren place where we cannot find anything for our souls. But at the same time, the world is making a great pompous display of its glory that might be tempting for somebody.

There is also the wealth of this world. The great river speaks of the wealth of the world. This was the river which was used to water the countries. And if you read in the Old Testament how the Egyptians watered their country with treading wheels to water the barren land and to make it like a garden, but it was done by the means of man.

They had to use their slaves that had to, with their foot, to work so that the country [00:15:05] could be watered, while God said, the land that I'm going to give you will drink from the water that you from heaven. It's not man doing something about it, but God is giving the blessing. It's not the result of the workings of man.

There was also the great sea, which speaks of the unrest of the world. This sea that never comes to rest. The nations of this world never come to rest.

They are always at war with each other, always some revolution, some upheaval.

That is what the world characterizes, but God says, I have given you a country that is separated from all this, where I'm going to bless you. Yes, Joshua, when you go there, there will be enemies. There will be opposition, but God says, there shall not any man be able to stand before [00:16:08] thee all the days of thy life.

As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

He says, you have experienced Joshua, you have gone all the 40 years with Moses, and you have seen that I was with Moses, and that I helped him that no enemy could stand before him. And what God is saying to Joshua here, he had said to Moses, in exactly the same words, can read that in Deuteronomy 31, that he says to Moses, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. That's what he says to Joshua. When you go in faith to take possession of the land, then I will be with thee.

I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Two wonderful promises of God.

[00:17:02] He will not forsake his people, and he will not fail thee.

We may, as man, we may promise somebody, I will never forsake you. I will always be with you, standing at your side.

But we could not promise that we could say, I will not fail thee. Because we are human beings, and we cannot be 24 hours at the same place and always.

Even mothers who are very extraordinary beings, who are able to do three or four things at the same time, but even if they have three, four children, they cannot be at the same time. They are not forsaking the children, but maybe they are at a moment not giving notice to what one child is doing, and something might happen. It might fall down or something like that. [00:18:01] But this is not so with God. Our God, the living God, is not like the God Elijah was talking about when he was speaking with a priest of Baal, when he said, well, your God may be sleeping, or he may be on a journey on holiday or something, that he doesn't hear your prayers. We have a God that is not forsaking, and not failing us. He's always there. He's always listening and taking care of his own all the way.

This is the promise he gives to Joshua. And then he says to him, be strong and of good courage, for unto this people shall thou divide for inheritance the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Be strong and of good courage.

That's exactly what we have in Ephesians. In Ephesians chapter 6, when Paul speaks about the Christian warfare, he says in Ephesians [00:19:03] chapter 6, verse 10, finally, my brethren, be strong

in the Lord and in the power of his might.

From the New Testament, we learn that the strength, the power we need is not our own. It is the strength of the Lord. It is the power of his might.

He says to Joshua, and he says it to you and me, be strong and courageous. If you want to take possession of your real spiritual blessings, if you want to enjoy your Christian faith, there will be opposition. The enemy will not stand aside and watch how you enjoy your blessings. And so you need strength, you need courage to be able to take this land, the inheritance, to take it into possession. But then something strange happens because, once again, God uses the same encouragement [00:20:04] and he even emphasizes, strengthens it. He says, oh, only be thou strong and very courageous. Obviously, there was something for which he needed more courage than to take possession of the land.

And what was that?

That thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. He says to Joshua, one thing is of primary importance in your life of faith, and that is the word of God.

You know, at Catford, there are two speakers, and this may cause a minor problem. For example, if the first speaker takes the hymn you have chosen to announce as the second [00:21:03] speaker, which Brother Graham did, but that is not really a problem. You will choose another one then. But another thing touched me when Brother Graham was talking about the importance of prayer and Bible study.

Because we will see in the next verses that that is one of the points I had on my heart as well to talk about.

And so, I have no doubt this is a message the Lord wants to put to us today, the importance prayer and Bible study have for the life of faith.

God starts when talking to Joshua and says to him, you have the word of God, and it is of primary importance for you to walk according to the word of God, to live your life according to the word of God, and not to deviate from this path, neither to the right hand nor to [00:22:02] the left.

And therefore, we have to be strong and very courageous, because God knows the tendency of our hearts that we may leave the word of God and go away from it to the either side or to the other.

Maybe if we are of a more light-hearted character, we may not take passages in the Bible seriously.

We say, well, that doesn't apply to us today anymore. This was Paul speaking, and this was Old Testament, and we leave the word of God to the one side.

On the other hand, if we are of a more serious character, we may say, well, we must add some more regulations to the word of God.

Grace alone cannot be, there must be some punishment, otherwise people will not live correctly.

So, we must find some rules, or somebody who couldn't understand what it means to live and to gather according to the name of the Lord and under the guidance of the Spirit. [00:23:03] He says, well, that doesn't work. We must find some rules, church regulations, liturgy, and some preacher who is responsible for this, and so adding things to the Bible.

Taking away from it or adding to it both is going away from the word of truth. The way we should go, you should go according to the word of God, as God had commanded him. I have found one man in Scripture of which it is said that he did exactly that.

And I'm taking up something we have heard in Canterbury, Brother Emil spoke about it. This man was a young man.

We may say, well, I'm 85 years, I may have so much experience that I walk according to the Scriptures and I'm no longer turning away from it. [00:24:01] But Scripture says in 2 Chronicles chapter 34, it speaks about a very young king in Israel, and it says about him, in 2 Chronicles 34 verse 1, Josiah was 8 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem 1 and 30 years, and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.

He was a young man of whom God said, well, he did what I wanted him to do, and he did not turn from it, neither to the one side nor to the other.

And there is another very precious promise in the Bible, in the prophet Isaiah chapter 30, God takes again our tendency and notes it in Isaiah 30 verse 21, and thine ears shall [00:25:15] hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

God says, should it happen that you turn to the right or to the left hand, you will hear a voice behind you, of course, because you have turned away, the voice is behind you, but you will hear the voice that says, This is the way.

I'm sure everybody who leaves the way the Lord has shown him in the Scriptures will hear this voice behind him, this is the way.

Why is it that so often when you talk with people that are no longer walking according [00:26:02] to Scripture, why are they getting so aggressive? Because they are in complete peace that their way is right? No, because they know in their heart, because God is, they are hearing this voice, if they are really believers, they are hearing the voice that says, This is the way. You have declined, you have turned away, but this is the way, go this way.

And then he says, well, Joshua, if you want to walk according to the word of God, you must of course know what the word of God says. You must study the word of God, and more than that, he says in verse 8, This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth.

Joshua was to be the leader of the people, he was to guide them, and if he was to guide the people of God, he should do so by the word of God. It should not depart from his mouth. When he was saying anything, making decisions, guiding the people, he should do so by the [00:27:04] word of God.

Not because he was so clever and had made so clever plans what they should do, but he should say, well, this is what the word of God says. That is what guidance is like, to show people the way with the word of God, saying, well, this is what the word of God says.

And you may now say, well, that is not for me, that is for some leading brothers. No, it is not, because guidance happens more often in life than we may think.

Are you working in Sunday school or youth work? What are you doing but guiding young people? And you should do so by the word of God.

Not because you have learned some clever psychological things to do, so that young people's work might be successful, but because the word of God tells us what we should tell them to [00:28:03] guide them. And if God has given you children, it starts in your own family to guide them by the word of God.

Your children should get the impression that in all decisions you take, you ask, what does the word of God say?

Then they will realize how important this word is in a believer's life.

But thou shalt meditate therein day and night.

Now he speaks about Bible study.

Thou shalt meditate therein day and night.

We all know this famous parallel in Psalm 1, which speaks about this blessed man.

And it says about this blessed man in Psalm 1, verse 2, but his delight is in the law [00:29:04] of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.

His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. There is this blessed man of whom it says he has his delight in the law of the Lord.

Have you a delight in Bible study, or is it simply a duty?

Well, I have to do it because everybody says I should. Or is there a delight in your heart?

And he says he meditates on it day and night, all the possible situations he has. And the result is he is like a tree planted by rivers of water. Fruit in his season. There is fruit in your life. The psalmist is thinking of the fig tree who brought fruit at different seasons, different [00:30:04] kinds of fruit.

There will be fruit in your life if you study the word of God. His leaf also shall not wither, an evergreen tree. Maybe the olive tree he is thinking about. And this speaks of your testimony.

Your testimony to others will be like a green tree if you study the word of God.

And there will be success. We come to that later. But I would like to turn to two verses from the Psalm 119, the psalm about the word of God, where you also find this day and night.

Psalm 119, verse 97.

The psalmist says, Oh, how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.

And in verse 148, he says, Mine eyes precede the night watches that I might meditate in [00:31:07] thy words.

All the day long when he had opportunity, he was studying the word of God. And when there were night watches, when he couldn't sleep at night, he was occupied with the word of God.

This is quite an important thing, dear brethren, that we, it is not unimportant what we think about.

Our thought life is not unimportant, just the opposite. What do we occupy our minds with?

It's a very important question for our practical Christian living. The other day, I got an email from a young sister, and she wrote, I didn't know her, she wrote, Hello, my name is Mary. Well, actually, my name is not Mary, but I don't want you to know my name, because it's [00:32:04] also awkward and what I would like to tell you. And then she wrote about the problems she had, some problems with her sexuality. The reason was the way she occupied her mind, what she was thinking about, what she was occupied with.

What are you reading?

Not to say watching.

And this has something to do with the night watches as well. Are we really occupied with the pure and good things, as the apostle says, meditating on the Word of God, studying the Word of God, a very important thing.

And I always tell the young people when we have a session on Bible study, what Brother Graham also did, I tell them, make a plan to study the Bible in one year. I'm doing this for some years now, and it is, I can only recommend it, when you hear [00:33:02] this, you say, wow, what amount do I have to read? No, it's not that much. It's not that much. If you really have a sensible plan to do that, you will find that you get to know the Bible better, more and more, so that it not happens as was mentioned, that there are passages in the Bible you've never read, you've never heard about, meditate on the Word of God. And he says, you should meditate on that Word day and night.

And I would like to read another book on Bible study from Proverbs, which may help us to find out how we should do that. Proverbs chapter 2, Proverbs chapter 2, verse 3.

Yea, if thou cryest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest [00:34:07] her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. In this verse, we have the two ingredients, so to say, of successful spiritual life and Bible study.

The first, when he says, if thou cryest after knowledge, liftest up thy voice for understanding, this is prayer. He is asking God to give him understanding, to give him knowledge. He has the desire that God may open the Word of God to him, and he prays for that. And the second is, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, that is intensive, systematic Bible study.

You will not find the treasures of the Bible just by flipping over some pages, or reading here and there. [00:35:01] You have to study the Bible systematically to really find the treasures that are hid in the Word of God.

And we need both paths.

If we only pray without systematic Bible study, we get mystical and not sound.

I have come across people who, when they want to know the will of God, they pray, and they just open their Bible, and put it on some verse, and say, well, that's the answer God has just given me.

You won't believe how strange people act in this way. Once a lady came to me after the meeting, and said, well, I have lots of cards with Bible verses.

And if I've got a question, decision, my life, or problem, I pray, and then I take out a card, and this was her Christian horoscope, which was telling her what to do. And she told me, it works, you know. I was feeling so bad, I couldn't eat anything. [00:36:02] And then I prayed, and I took out this card, and it says that Daniel's friends were only eating vegetables and drinking water. And I did it a second time, and I pulled out another card, and it spoke about the corn of the land. And since then, I'm only eating vegetables and corn, and she was feeling very well, and well, in this case, it may have worked, but this is not the way how we study the Bible, and how we do these things. We study the Bible systematically. But also, if we do it the other way around, if we only study the Bible without praying, without asking the Lord to show us what He wants to teach us, then we may get an intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures, but it doesn't touch our lives.

Once when we had a meeting of Sunday school teachers and youth workers, one of them said, you know, I have taught in a class the subject of the Passover.

[00:37:03] And he said, and there were some of the youngsters who could answer every question, but there were also some who had tears in their eyes. He said, and I prefer the other group. You can know everything, but it doesn't touch you. It's an intellectual thing.

But if we pray and ask the Lord, I'm opening the Bible to study it systematically, but I want to know what that means for me, what God wants to teach me out of that.

That's what Joshua should do, what we should do, meditate on this word day and night. That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. Of course, the Lord does not give us His word for an academic discussion, but it should have an influence, an impact on our lives. And if the Lord makes something clear to you, you are under the obligation, under the responsibility [00:38:01] to do that.

And I can promise you, only if you obey what God has shown you, you will grow spiritually.

Otherwise, your spiritual growth will come to an end. If you are very clear about what God says, but you don't do it, you don't put it into practice, that's why God has told it to you, made something clear to you. And that's the way how I have seen many people in their spiritual lives growing. That there was something God had made them clear, and they did that. They did not everything, they did not understand everything at once, but there was one thing that was clear and plain to them, and so they did it.

And that's what is told to Joshua. You should observe all these things.

For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

[00:39:09] So he says, on such a way, studying the word of God, being in obedience under the word of God, you will have success.

What does that mean? You will have a life without problems, going from success to success in this world, getting a pay rise, and we may study an example of that in the book of Genesis, chapter 39.

There's a man of whom it is said that all that he did was successful, Joseph.

Chapter 39, verse 2, Joseph was brought to Egypt, verse 2 it says, and the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man, and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. He was a prosperous man, and what happens? [00:40:04] He was thrown to jail, because of the incident with Potiphar's wife. And what does it say in prison? Verse 23, the same chapter, the keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

And what happens? He was forgotten in prison by the cupbearer.

So we see, this success is not what the world might call success.

Yes, the Lord gave him success, but this doesn't mean there were no more problems. But in a spiritual way, he was guided, and the Lord gave him success. We find this same in the New Testament, in 1 Timothy, where Paul gives a similar instruction to his young fellow worker Timothy, 1 Timothy 4, verse 15, he says, [00:41:13] Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.

We have the same thing in principle, he says meditate on these things, think about them, study them, give thyself wholly to them, obey them wholeheartedly, and then your success, your prospering will be, may appear to all. Others will see that you have grown spiritually because you obeyed the word of God.

And then, Joshua gets a last encouragement of the Lord, in verse 9, Have not I commanded thee, be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, [00:42:06] for the Lord thy God is with thee, withersoever thou goest.

Well, Joshua probably was feeling the responsibility of this great task he had, and God says, Have not I commanded thee?

He had the command of the Lord, and that should be enough for him. God had said to him, go, and he should go, and God had promised to be with him. Have not I commanded thee? The Lord used a similar word to another of his servants, Gideon, he says, Have I not sent thee?

We need the call of the Lord for the work we do. And if he has called us, if he has sent us, we can go.

As men, we would like to have a lot of other securities. We would like to get all kinds of things.

[00:43:03] We would wish that the Lord would send us a letter or a kind of plan in which he tells us what will happen in the next five years, but he's not going to do that. He simply says, go.

As he said to three of his servants in the book of Acts, get up and go. And so we should go. Have I not commanded thee? Maybe we are feeling the Lord is calling us to some work, and we are still hesitating.

And then we hear his question where he says, Have I not commanded thee? Have I not sent thee? What are you waiting for? Arise and go.

That's what Joshua should do, and which he did. He went on in faith.

He went, we have not read all the chapters in between, how they went over to the Jordan, how he met the captain of the army of the Lord, and how they conquered Jericho, this [00:44:01] great city of the enemy, but we have read something from chapter 7 at the end.

In principle, I would have liked to follow Brother Graham's example and put the positive at the end, but then I would have to rewrite history, and so it followed after this positive beginning, so I must put it at the end, just as a warning to us, what could happen when we start with the Lord, but on the way we lose our dependence from the Lord, which we need for every step of the way. Peter walking on the water, he did not only need the dependence on the Lord for the first step out of the boat, but for every step on the water, and that's what we find here. There was this little city Ai, which they could not defeat.

[00:45:03] Why was that? Well, there are several reasons, of course, I'll just mention a few. The first reason we may find in the chapter before, in chapter 6, the last verse, verse 27. So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised throughout all the country. Joshua had become famous, and it is always dangerous for a servant of the Lord to become famous, because then there is the danger that you lose the dependence of the Lord. When Joshua got the command at the beginning, he was perhaps a bit fearful. He needed the Lord, but now he was victorious, and he was famous. So he did some things that he should not have done.

One thing I just mentioned in passing, it's not my subject tonight. One thing was, of course, as you know, that there was sin in the midst of the people, [00:46:02] the sin of Achan, what he had done, which was one of the reasons. Well, you might say, why did God put this sin to the people of Israel?

They didn't know about it. It was the single act of one man, in secret, nobody knew about it. Oh, that's right.

But this chapter makes it clear that their condition was responsible that they didn't know about it.

We have a similar thing in the New Testament, in the first epistle to the Corinthians. They had some sin in their midst. The difference is they knew about it, of course, but they did not know what to do with it. And Paul did not criticize them for not knowing what they should do with it. But he says, if your condition would have been different, if you had mourned about these things, then God would have taken care to put this man out of the midst. [00:47:01] God couldn't act because of their low condition. And we have the same thing here. God could not reveal the thing to them because they didn't ask him.

They did not, you don't read in the whole chapter that they asked the Lord, shall we go against Ai?

They didn't ask that.

If they had, I'm sure God would have said no, because there is some sin in your midst and you must judge that first. But he couldn't reveal it to them at that point because they didn't ask him. What they did, they sent spies.

Why did they do that? They had already sent the spies in chapter 2. Shouldn't that have been enough? The Lord had not told them to send spies. That was a plan they had made, a human plan, while it might be good to take a look at the situation.

[00:48:01] And so they sent spies and they sent these men from Jericho, not from Gilgal, the place of self-judgment, from their place of victory. They were still celebrating their victory at Jericho on land going.

That is a danger if you do not go back to Gilgal. If we think, well, we have won the victory over Jericho and now let's look what the city of Ai has to tell us.

And so these men went and they came back. What did they say? Oh, they said to Joshua, let not all the people go up. Two, three hundred are enough to send and to smite Ai, and there was a defeat.

Israel was defeated by this little city. This all sounds very similar to something at the first sight, very similar to something in the book of Judges, chapter 7, but there's a great difference.

[00:49:06] Judges 7, verse 2, and the Lord said unto Gideon, the people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands.

Here in the book of Judges, what's the difference to Joshua? In Judges, God is speaking. In the book of Joshua, the people are speaking. In the book of Judges, God is saying, Gideon, you are here now to find the Midianites. There were 32,000 Israelites and 135,000 Midianites, which was a relation of one to four about.

One Israelite had to fight four Midianites, and God said, no, too many.

[00:50:03] And then he said, all those that are fearful, are afraid, should go home.

And General Gideon saw his army reduced considerably.

So that after that, the relationship was one to 13, 14.

Now one Israelite had to fight 13, 14 Midianites, and God said, still too many.

But now the people are not deciding who is to go or not, but I will tell you who should go and who not at the water.

Those that were taking water in passing, realizing that they were the warriors who had to fight, should stand on one side. And those that might rest at the water, sitting down, he said, put them on the other side. [00:51:01] And so 300 were left, one to 450.

One Israelite had to fight 450 Midianites.

That is what we call mission impossible. He should have said, no, we are not going, we cannot do that. God said, wonderful.

If you realize that, if you realize that it is impossible for you, that's the time where I can step in.

And if you have a victory, gained a victory, you will not say, well, that was our strength in our army and our tactics or whatever, but you can only say that was the doing of God. But in the book of Joshua, it's the other way around. In the book of Joshua, the people say, oh, no, no, this enemy is not so dangerous. We need not for the whole company to bother them to fight. We will do this with a few of us, that's enough.

[00:52:05] And then they had to learn that we could not fight our own fights in our own strength.

That's what they had to learn. Therefore, this defeat.

So what I wanted to point out was that what we need to do is to follow the Lord in dependence on him, trust on him and his strength, meditate on his words, being in prayer, the sign of dependence to possess what he has given us.

The enemy will try to attack us, he will try to hinder us, but God has given us everything we need to be successful.

But as soon as we lose our dependence on the Lord, as soon as we think, well, we can do that in our own strength, we are sure for a defeat.

[00:53:02] May the Lord keep us at his sight so that he can gain the victory.

It is what he will do in our lives what will be rewarded in heaven.

There is nothing that you have done in your own strength that he will reward. But what he rewards is what he has done in your life and mine.

Could we sing in closing the hymn 282, Christian, seek not yet repose, cast thy dreams of ease away, thou art in the midst of foes, watch and pray. 282.