

Joshua 07-02-16b

Let's resume our study in the book of Joshua via Numbers chapter 20. We're needing to back up just a little bit from where we are with the Israelites on the east side of the Jordan, and the spies in Jericho talking to Rahab. And Rahab says, "We have heard how God dried up the water of the Red Sea," which tells you that 40 years earlier, that was no trip through a couple of inches of swamp water. Now, she says, "And we have heard what you all did to Sihon and Og over on the other side."

So, we want to find out what happened. Thirty-seven, 38 years of silence while the Israelites basically wander and drop, and wander and drop, and wander and drop, until nearly all of that first generation has wandered and dropped. And there's just a few of them left.

Moses has gone with his brother Aaron. He's done the thing with the water. And this is the test for the second generation.

And just like their parents, they are grumbling. And they don't have the faith to take. Do you think that God could have given them victory going through the southern border of Canaan, if they were up for it? If they had the faith, they could have blasted right through those southern defenses, but they don't have it.

So, he's going to take them around by the way of Edom. Do you think they could have gotten their way with the Edomites? Yes, but they don't have the faith, so they're going to go around. And if you look at your handout, you can see this path from Mount Hor, where Aaron is buried, and see how they head over, and you see that place called Zalmonah and Punan? Well, they headed over to Edom, and then they had to go back to Mount Hor.

Now, they're going to go down south, and they're going to go all the way down to Ezion-Geber, we'll call it. If I gave you the Hebrew pronunciation, you'd never recognize it.

So, Aaron dies, and in chapter 21, we'll back up. We're still at Mount Hor. You see that little up-and-down thing from Kadesh to Hormah and back down to Mount Hor? That's where we are right now in chapter 21. The king of Arad, the Canaanite who dwelt in the south, heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim.

This is that northern deal in the desert of Zin there, and just past the name Hormah right above it, you see Arad. Well, the king—and this is the mayor, he's just like the mayor of Jericho. He's the city-state ruler.

He hears that they're coming. So, he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners. Now, this is just dismal.

Israel has got all of these people. They've got all of these young, hale-hardy men, and yet this little guy from Arad comes down and defeats them and takes some of them prisoner as they're trying to come up on the southern route. So, Israel made a vow to the Lord and said, "If You will indeed deliver these people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities."

And the Lord listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So, the name of that place was called Hormah. And this is the word for destruction.

Obliteration is a good translation in Hebrew. Now, look at where Arad is. Which side of the Dead Sea? It's on the west side.

So, if you destroyed them and utterly destroyed their cities, what should you be able to do now? Go north, young man. North to Canaan. Go north.

The rush is on. But they don't go. Why? What was the vow they made to the Lord? "We'll utterly destroy their cities."

Give us victory over these Aradites, and we will take the place by storm. Well, they don't. They turn around and they go south.

So, look. Look at verse 4 of Numbers 21. They journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea.

See where Mount Hor is? See where the Gulf of Aqaba is? It's supposed to be marching north and destroying the cities of the Canaanites, according to the vow. And which direction are they heading? Go south to the Red Sea. Go south.

The rush is not on. And that's what they're doing. They're going south by the way of the Red Sea.

Why? Moses has determined that these people, their vow notwithstanding, do not have thechutzpah to go north through those defenses. They cannot fulfill that vow. They don't have the faith.

So, what are they going to do? They're going to go hook around and come up the other way, which was the original plan with the first faithless generation. That's why they went down that triangular peninsula to Mount Sinai and skirted the southern edge of the Desert of Zin and the Desert of Paran there. So, now they're going to try to go up there along the King's Highway area once again.

So, they come by the way of the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. And the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. Can you imagine why? The land is north. We're going south. What is up with this? Why is it we're not going north into the land? Why is it we're going south?

And the people spoke against God and against Moses. "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no food. There is no water. Our soul loathes this worthless bread."

What is the worthless bread they're talking about? Manna. What is it? Stuff that falls from the sky that God has fed them with for 40 years. After four decades of eating—38, 39 years of eating manna—they are sick up to here with the manna.

Now, this is a bad attitude. I'm sorry, but it's a bad attitude. They are on the verge of going in the way of the first generation, aren't they? They're imitating them. They're echoing them in so many ways.

"We loathe this worthless bread." This is the second generation. This is the generation Joshua is going to lead into the land. This is the generation that's going to march around Jericho. This is the generation that's going to go in and conquer the Canaanites. But look at them at this stage.

It's not very promising, is it? So what happened? The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and many of the people of Israel died. Now, there was chastisement for the first generation also, wasn't there? And what was their response to that chastisement? This is what separates the first generation from the second.

It isn't like this generation just grew up with a golden spiritual spoon in their mouth, and they never were faithless, and they never grumbled. They're as good at grumbling and as good at complaining as their parents. The difference here is their response to the discipline of the Lord. Watch closely.

The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. The fiery serpents bit the people, and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore, the people came to Moses.

Moses doesn't go to them and say, "You people have sinned. I'm going to grind up this idol and feed it to you. I'm going to put it in the drinking water."

The people come to Moses. They say, "Moses, we screwed up. We have sinned. We spoke against the Lord. We spoke against you."

This is your Psalm 51, 1 John 1 and 9, spontaneous, voluntary confession of sin. These people have got one thing over their predecessors. They recognize their error. They confess their error, and they come to Moses, and they say, "We've sinned against God. We've sinned against you. Pray to the Lord, then take the serpents away from us. We get it. We get it. Take the serpents away."

So Moses prayed for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent. Set it on a pole. It shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."

Look and live. Moses made a bronze serpent, put it on a pole, so it was that if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived. These people are making these positive decisions. There is voluntary acknowledgment: "I messed up. My sin is just as bad as my parents, but my fate is not going to be the same."

Why? "I am going to God. I am claiming His mercy." He puts the serpent on the pole. "I am going to look, and I am going to live."

This is what distinguishes the second generation from the first. Not the level of error, which is the same, but it is the response to the grace of God in getting them out of their error. Notice, when God says they are going to live, they are really going to live. These are the people that are going to cross the Jordan. These are the people that are going to enter the land. These are the people that are going to eventually achieve victory.

We have speculated before. I remember, and it is an interesting speculation, that when Moses puts this serpent—how do you cast bronze when you are out in the wilderness like this? You are going to get some copper, and you are going to get some—I forget what the components are. It is either tin, or I forget what the ingredients of bronze are, because I forget what is brass. It seems like brass is copper and tin, and bronze is copper and lead, and I don't know what all.

Anyway, he cooked up some bronze. He melted primarily copper and whatever the other ingredients are. But when you are out in the desert there, it is not like you have a lot of tools and equipment to cast bronze into some kind of snappy three-dimensional shape, like a coiled serpent like you have on the medical device there, the staff of—what is his name there? The little—I forget what that is.

But anyway, how is Moses going to do this? If you are going to make a snake, what is the fastest way? Get the rod and cut a groove in the sand, make it a little wavy like a snake, and pour your molten stuff into it. When it hardens, you pick this thing up, and what have you got? You have got basically sort of a linear wavy snake, right?

If you latch that to a pole and raise it up on high, what is it going to look like? Upright pole, vertical snake—what does it look like? What do you think the shadow of that thing might look like if you stick it up there and it is on the ground? It could very easily have been a cross-like shape, couldn't it? And Jesus refers to this. He says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

So Moses makes it, he puts it on the pole, if it has bitten anyone, they look at it and they live. Now, the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth. Nobody knows where Oboth is. It is lost to us.

They journeyed from Oboth and camped at Ije-abarim. Now, if you look, you see where Ezion-Geber is down there at the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, and you follow the King's Highway up past Zalmonah and Punan, and you look to the left, you can see Ije-abarim.

So now they have hooked around Edom, and you can see on your diagram there, they had to go around the eastern side of Edom because Edom wouldn't let them through. So that's where they are now. They're up sort of east and a little south of the bottom edge of the Dead Sea there.

From there, they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnon. Now, the Arnon is a creek or a riverbed that goes west and flows into the center of the Dead Sea, which is in the wilderness that extends from the border of the Amorites, for the Arnon is the border of Moab between Moab and the Amorites. Therefore, it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord, "Waheb and Suphah, the brook of Arnon, the slope of the brooks that reaches the drawing of Ar and lies on the border of Moab."

If we were doing Numbers, I would tell you some stuff about this, but I can't. We don't have time. From there, they went to Beer. What does Beer mean in Hebrew? We have a client with this name. Here in Dallas, a property management company, it's called Beer Wells. Sometimes you'll see there—well, that's like a duplication, it's a repetition thing, because Beer in Hebrew means well. Beer-sheba, seven wells. Beer-lahai-roi is where Hagar said, "This is the well where I saw God," and so on. Or the place where God sees me, the well where God sees me.

Anyway, this is just called Beer. It's a well. It's a source of water. And this is the well where the Lord said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water."

Now notice, there is no striking or speaking to a rock this time. God brings them to the well. Why? This is a picture of making progress. God can now give them this, and they're not grumbling and complaining. There is no Meribah here.

And so God gives them the water. And Israel now praises God, and they say, "Spring up, O well, all of you sing to it, the well the leaders sank, dug by the nation's nobles, by the lawgiver with their staves." From that wilderness they went to Matanah, from Matanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, from Bamoth in the valley that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looks down on Yeshimon, which looks down on the wasteland, or the barren area.

Now you can see some of those in this path on your map there. This is where Rahab is going to talk now, in Numbers 21:21. Israel has gone around the Edomites. They're way up there in the middle of the area.

Israel sent messenger to Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying pretty much the same thing he said to the Edomites. "Let me pass through your land. We won't turn aside into fields of vineyards. We won't drink water from the wells. We'll go by the king's highway until we pass through your territory."

Notice: soft spoken. Opportunity to pass through. No conflict. No battle.

Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. Sihon gathered all his people together and went out against Israel in the wilderness. Came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. You can see Jahaz up there on your map, due east of the middle of the Dead Sea, just left of the big word Moab there. Jahaz.

Notice: Israel did not fight Edom, but they are going to fight Sihon. Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword and took possession of his land from Arnon to the Jabbok. Look up at the Jabbok. The Jabbok runs into the middle of the Jordan River up there. See that? Up in Gilead. They grabbed a big chunk of territory.

And this is fertile fields. They started out down there at the mountain Pisgah, which looks out over Yeshimon, which is kind of barren and desolate. But through this victory against Sihon, they have taken hold of lush green fields. This is going to be why Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh are going to want to stay on that side, because this is such a good land.

Well, this is where they take it. Notice they've already cut their teeth. They've already had a practice run in battle. This is really the first battle this generation has fought and won, unlike when they went up against the king of Arad and had kind of a humiliating defeat and had lost some people as prisoners of war.

And they go as far as the Ammonites, but they stop there because the border of the people of Ammon is fortified. So they stop at the Jabbok. Israel took all these cities, and Israel dwelt in the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and all its villages. You can see Heshbon is right on the king's highway there.

Heshbon was the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken all his land from his hand as far as the Arnon. Therefore those who speak in Proverbs say, "Come to Heshbon, let it be built, let the city of Sihon be repaired. Far went out from Heshbon, a flame from the..."

We don't have time to go through all of this. There's a poem that they had about that. You get down there: "Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites."

Moses sent to spy out Jazer. See, that's just up the road from Heshbon, on the king's highway. They took its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there.

Now, think about this. This is kind of like the Marines doing a landing and establishing a beachhead. If you're going to go in and take the land of Canaan, you can't be worrying about your flanks. You can't be worrying about the rear area, right? You don't want to be trying to go across the Jordan and start taking the land of Canaan, and here's somebody coming from behind you, the Amorites, or Sihon, or Og, king of Bashan, and coming in there and attacking you from the rear.

So, establishing a base. This, to me, represents in spiritual terms—remember I was talking on the break about the different kinds of churches? You have that first level where you get your basics and you kind of lay your foundation: change of mind away from dead works, faith toward God, and so on.

This is what Israel does down south when they learn to trust God for their water, and they learn to trust God for their bread, and they learn not to complain. They learn to accept provision of God, whatever it may be. And when they come to Beer and God gives them water, now they praise God. They've got a positive approach. That's kind of like the basic level.

Now they're coming up into the land of the Amorites and God is giving them victories. These are small victories, a village at a time. They're learning to use their weapons. They're learning how to attack. They're learning how to defend. They're learning how to fight. They're learning how to seize and hold ground.

But they're doing it on the east side of the Jordan against these medium-sized enemies, areas that have already been softened up. There's already been some sort of internecine warfare up here. And Sihon has already fought and taken over some land, and now they're taking Sihon. So they're taking away from him what he took away from somebody else.

And so this is the intermediate. This is the sort of high school. If the low part was elementary school, this is junior high and high school for the Israelites. And they're maturing here. They're growing and getting to know their weapons and their leaders and how to fight.

So they take the villages. They drive out the Amorites who are there. Now they've already defeated Sihon and taken his villages and cities and consolidated their holdings. They've got territory. They've got a base of operations now.

Now in verse 33, they turned and went up by the way to Bashan. Now look on your map there. Up toward the top, toward Mount Hermon, you see the territory of Bashan. This is north of the Sea of Galilee. See the little pond there that's labeled Sea of Kinnereth? That's the Sea of Galilee. And they're moving up into Bashan.

Og king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And if you look on your map, it's over to the right and south. And this is going to be sort of the northeastern flank area.

The Lord said to Moses, "Do not fear him. I have delivered him into your hand with all his people and his land. And you shall do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites who dwelt at Heshbon."

And Israel believes God. And they go up against Og king of Bashan and they defeat him, his sons and all his people. So there's no survivor left him. And they took possession of his land.

Now, let's just stop right here. Look at this handout. Look at the path of the children of Israel. Because this is the way our life a lot of times goes. You start up here in the desert of Zin and you think, "I'm going to go north from Kadesh, and I'm just going to go into the land. I'm going to take charge. I'm going to take hold of the promises of God. I'm going to take possession of these things."

And we're not ready. We have not had the experience. We haven't developed the faith and the obedience and the lack of grumbling and complaining. Our perspective has not changed yet. We're too young in the faith. That's what this second generation of Israelites is.

And counterintuitively, they have to march south. It doesn't make sense from a human point of view that if you want to take the land of Canaan, you go south by the way of the Red Sea. It's completely baffling to the human mind. Why would you not just stay there and train and store up and do some drills and things and then attack up through the south?

God says, "No, go south. Go the opposite direction. You've got to shed the last of that old generation. You've got to have Miriam die. You've got to Aaron die. These people who don't have the perspective to go into the land, who won't step up in faith and in obedience to do what needs to be done."

So they go this way. And they have to take some discipline. They have the fiery serpents come in. And notice, they learn the lesson of those fiery serpents. For this generation, this is really the only discipline they ever get.

They grumble and complain. The fiery serpents come. Moses lifts up that bronze serpent. And they respond. They look and they live. And this generation doesn't get any more discipline in this part of the wilderness and in this part of the journey. They learn their lesson.

And the next time God provides water for them, they are singing God's praises. And God begins to give them victory. And they learn how to use their weapons. But they are still outside the land. They are still on the wrong side of the Jordan. But this is where God needs them to be.

And what is the lesson that we take from this? It's the same thing you find in the New Testament. You have need of patience. You have need of endurance. If you're going to inherit the promises, Paul tells people over and over again in his epistles, you've got to have faith. You've got to have patience. You've got to have endurance.

You can't be a flash in the pan. You can't come to Christ and come to faith and come to the Word of God and expect everything to turn to the promised land flowing with milk and honey in a couple of weeks or a couple of months. It takes consistency. It takes faithfulness. It takes trust in God.

And if we go through a period of discipline because we've gotten in a hurry or we've gotten impatient, we've gotten testy and implacable and we've contended with God, we're arguing with God, "Why aren't you doing it my way?" and the fiery serpents come and bite and we suffer some losses, we've got to learn from that.

And that's what this generation of Israelites does. Now God can bring them up beside the land and start giving them victories. And they consolidate their gains and they learn that there is this intermediate time.

Moses was a prince in Egypt, but he had to go spend 40 years in Midian doing something parallel. Instead of herding people, he's herding goats. But he's consolidating and he's learning how to lead and he's learning the land. He's going to end up leading Israel for another 40 years in the same land where he already spent 40 years, because this is where he pastored his flocks for his father-in-law Jethro the Midianite.

So he knows where the water is. He knows where the pasturage is. He knows where shelter is. And it's great preparation. He doesn't realize it at the time. He might think that his life's become a dead end. And yet this is exactly the experience he needs to fulfill God's plan for his life and for the nation of Israel, and for that second generation to grow up and mature and be ready to go in under the leadership of Joshua.

So if you look at this handout and you look at the path of Israel and you see this bumping up against the southern border and going down to Mount Hor and suffering some more losses and going south to Ezion-Geber, not being able to take the King's Highway, having to go and skirt Edom and go the long way around, and it seems like, "When are we ever going to get there? Isn't the 40 years up by now?"

And yet God is using every day and every mile of this journey to train these people and give them the tools they're going to need to be successful. And without their knowledge, these victories on the east side of the Jordan are melting the hearts of the Canaanites. God is winning this battle for them and winning this campaign for them, and they don't even know it.

They think, "What are we doing fighting these Amorites over here?" And yet the victory God is giving them is winning the victory in advance in the place where it really counts. The people's hearts are already melting. Their courage is already fading and dissipating.

And this is what Rahab is telling the spies: "We heard about Sihon. We heard about Og, king of Bashan. The people have no courage left." The psychological war has already been won, and the Israelites didn't even know it was taking place.

God led them where they needed to be because the wisdom of man is greater—is insufficient compared to the greater wisdom of God. God knows what He's doing when He takes us in seemingly wrong directions, counterintuitive directions.

But it's good for the Israelites because now they have their military skills. It's good preparation. It has softened up the attitude and the resistance of the Canaanites because they are scared to death. There's some God who is giving this ragtag bunch that's been wandering around for 38 years—suddenly they're achieving victories, and they're driving people out and seizing their land and seizing their cities.

They have surrounded Canaan on the east. They're all the way up in Bashan. They're all the way down past the limits of the Dead Sea, all the way around Edom. And kind of like MacArthur in World War II, the ones that they haven't fought, they've bypassed and isolated. The Edomites are isolated now. What are they going to do?

This is what Joshua chapter 2 is talking about, and that one line by Rahab implies a lot. And you have to know the history and what a great application it is for us because many times our life takes a strange path. Many times we suffer defeats. Many times we think, “How come I didn't get that victory? How come I didn't defeat the king of Arad?”

God knew that by taking the Israelites around and defeating the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan, this would be the means of achieving victories later on. And although there is discipline, although there is disappointment, although there is delay—the three, you know, if I was a good Dallas Seminary graduate, I would make those my alliterating points: disappointment, discipline, and delay—God works it together for good.

God uses this as the crowbar that is going to pry the Canaanites out of their complacency and out of their sense of superiority and out of their confidence, and they're beat before they start. So when you look at that dotted line and you see the wanderings of the Israelites and you think, you know, “My life often seems like it's a dotted line that's going in the wrong direction. I don't see how God is going to work this together for good,” just remember: faith and patience.

If you want to inherit the promises, be faithful, be patient. Don't do the Meribah thing and shake a fist against God and say, “I'm tired of this bread. I'm tired of this water.” The Israelites are still subsisting on manna. The manna follows them as they go around the eastern border of Edom.

God provides water at Beer. God provides a place to pasture their flocks up in the land of Dibon and Arnon and all the way up the King's Highway, all the way up to the Jabbok, and now all the way beyond the Jabbok. And this rich, lush pasture land is now theirs.

Why do you think people were fighting over this land? Why did Sihon take it away from Og up in Bashan? Because it's rich, desirable land, and that's why Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh are going to want to stay there because it's so good.

But this is the provision that God makes for them. This is their base of operations. This is where their supplies will come from. This is how they will not be outflanked in the future. And many times the hard lessons that we learn in life prepare us for the future because now we're not going to be flanked. We're not going to be undone. We're not going to be shot from behind by things in our future.

So just remember that. I have cut this little deal out. I've printed it on purpose so it would be the size of your Bible. And if you don't have a good map in the back of your Bible, just cut this little rectangle out and stick it in your Bible. And every time you look at that little dotted line that looks like it's wandering all around, look at how God works every foot of that journey together so that this generation will be able to enter the land.

That's what this journey accomplishes with its disappointments, with its discipline, with its delay. God works it together for good. And when Rahab says, “We know what God has done for you,” it's all about the victories.

Well, back to Joshua chapter 2. “I know,” Rahab says to the men, “that the Lord has given you the land. The terror of you has fallen on us.” In verse 9, the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. Isn't this something? These are the people who got embarrassed and routed and taken prisoner just a few months before down at the southern border of the land. These are the ones who were fended off by the Edomites. It had to take a long way around.

And Rahab says, “Everybody is afraid of you people because we've heard what God has done for you. Our hearts melted.” In verse 11, “There does not remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”

God's power shines through the Israelites and their experience. And that is our life. Even when we have failures, even when we suffer setbacks, if we are responsive, if we look and live when that deliverance is raised up above us and we look and we trust that God's promises are true, cursing turns to blessing. Setback turns to the foundation for victory.

And this is not just a story. It's not here just to be sort of a filler for the Old Testament. The reason these things are written down and the reason they are preserved is for our instruction. This is our life. All of us mess up. All

of us become faithless at different times. We don't have endurance. We don't have courage. We don't have trust. But we can learn from this example, and we can be the avenue of deliverance for others.

The Israelites have had their setbacks and their failures, and they have learned to trust God on the far side of the Jordan. Now look: these two men who have crossed the Jordan into Jericho and are talking to Rahab on her roof in the middle of the night, they are going to be a means, an avenue of deliverance, of salvation for Rahab and her family.

Those who used to need deliverance themselves are now going to be those who can speak the truth in love and be the means of deliverance for others. That's what our life can do. We will no longer need to be those who are rescued and those who are carried along. We can become that for others.

Look at what they say. Rahab says, "I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house. Give me a true token. Spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

The man answered her, "Our lives for your lives, if none of you tell this business of ours. When the Lord has given us the land, we will deal kindly and truly with you."

And because Rahab and her family are receptive to the people of God and to the plan and purpose of God, they recognize it: "Your God is the God of heaven. Your God is the God on earth. You are the people whom God is blessing. We accept that, and we want to become a part of that."

The men say, "If that's your attitude, come on board. We will deal kindly and truly with you." By the way, the words for kindness and truth here, *chesed* and *emet*, great, profound, biblical words. *Chesed* is often summarized in English as loyal love. It's translated here kindness, but it is loyalty. It is ongoing policy of benefit. Loyal love is about as close as you can get in a short phrase in English.

*Chesed* is a very rich and meaningful word. It means faithfulness over a long span of time. And *emet*, truth: there is no deception. There is no going back. There is no breaking of promise. There is no breaking of covenant. We will have this policy of *chesed* toward you and *emet*, truth.

So she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall and she dwelt on the wall. She said to them, "Get to the mountain lest the pursuers meet you." Remember, the pursuers are heading down the shallows, the road that goes to the Jordan. So she says, "You climb up high while they are looking down low, and wait three days until the pursuers have returned."

I wish we had time to go through all of the periods of three days in the Bible. I gave you just a short summary of them last time. Wait three days, then you can continue. Three days is that death-to-life period I mentioned last time. Joseph with the butler and the baker: three days later, one of them is elevated and the other is also elevated. He is hanged. Fate is determined after three days.

So the men said to her, "We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear unless you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window."

One of Dr. W. A. Criswell's most famous sermons, on New Year's Eve in 1961, December 31st, he started at seven o'clock in the evening and preached until midnight. And the title of that sermon was *The Scarlet Thread Through the Bible*. And in one evening he started at Genesis 1 all the way through Revelation talking about the grace of God, salvation made available, grace before judgment, the opportunity that God has given time after time after time all the way through history.

That sermon was transcribed and put into a book, and it has been Dr. Criswell's most popular book, *The Scarlet Thread Through the Bible*. And it is a tracing of God's grace before judgment, the speaking softly before the big stick falls, and those who look can live. Those who heed and respond don't have to suffer judgment. There is no reason to suffer.

And of course this is totally opposed to the whole Calvinist Reformed theology that unless God has predestined you, you are without hope and without God in the world and there is no salvation. Not at all.

So, scarlet cord in the window, that is the sign. And it is just like the blood on the doorposts in Egypt. The scarlet cord—of course, she is not an Israelite. She can't do the sacrifice. She can't splash blood on her doorposts. But she can bind this scarlet cord in the window, and as long as people remain in that house behind that scarlet mark, they will be delivered.

Anybody who goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood will be on his own head and we will be guiltless. And you know that these two men that Joshua handpicked are men of spiritual insight, and they are thinking back to that night 40 years before when blood was put on the doorposts, and when death came through against the firstborn, those who were in the house marked with the blood were spared.

Whoever is with you in the house, his blood will be on our head if a hand is laid upon him. If you tell this business of ours, we will be free from the oath which you made us swear. You have to indicate your agreement and your good faith with us by not betraying us.

She said, "According to your words, so be it." She sent them away. They departed. She bound the scarlet cord in the window.

They departed and went to the mountain, stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way. This is—the roads run along the valleys, not along the mountaintops. They did not find them.

The two men returned, descended from the mountain, crossed over. They came to Joshua the son of Nun and told him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us."

And isn't it interesting that for the second generation there are also two spies who come back and say, "Let's go in and take the land," but the ten spies that are faithless are not a part of this picture. It's as though Joshua never even sent them. But these are people who are ready. These are people who have demonstrated their readiness.

Well, this brings us to Joshua chapter 3, and Joshua is going to rise early in the morning and set out from the Acacia Grove. But listen, that experience of Numbers chapter 20 and chapter 21 and chapter 22 is essential to understanding why this victory can take place.

That first generation wanders undocumented, virtually unknown. What happened during those 38 years? And the history picks up when they come up against the land and can't go in, and the Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebellion takes place. That's the last we hear of that generation. And there are 38 years of silence.

And the history picks up with this generation and what they do beginning in Numbers chapter 20. And it is what God does with them, even in their failures. God works it together for good. And God uses their trip around Edom and up through the land of the Amorites, which seems like a detour and seems like they are in the wrong place at the wrong time, but God works it together for good.

And this is the key to their victory when they finally enter that long-sought-after land of promise, promise to Abraham, promise to Isaac, promise to Jacob, thought about during all those years of slavery in Egypt. Joseph's bones sitting there waiting to be carried into that land. They still got those bones with them 40 years later, and they are finally going to go in. And God has worked it all together for good.

When you look at that dotted line, it is an encouragement. Don't be discouraged. Our failures cannot stop the plan of God if we look and live. Our discipline, our intermediate stages of training that seem like they are off the mark and out of the way, cannot stop the plan of God. It's all a part of being ready.

If we just continue to trust God, if we don't fade out, if we praise Him when He brings us the water, if we don't get tired of the manna that may be the same thing we have been eating day after day, year after year, for 40 years, but we don't tire of it, we don't grumble and complain about it, we just wait for God's time and we wait for God's place and we wait for God's leadership, and at the right time and the right place, everything, the confluence of circumstances God has created, will bring about the greatest military victories that Israel will ever know under Joshua as they go across the Jordan into the land.

That's what we will pick up in chapter 3 next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for these things that have been recorded for our instruction and our encouragement in the pages of the Old Testament. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts, and may we be encouraged and strengthened by these examples. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.