

Let's pick up our study now in Joshua. We slowed down for a bit, and I realized it was slow, but it was necessary, at least it seemed like it to me, to talk about these categories of dedicated things. Because if you don't understand the severity of the offense, it's difficult to understand the severity of the punishment, and it seems like excessive punishment.

There's a big modern, postmodern, whatever you want to call it, view, recent view, in the last few generations, that the physical discipline of children is harmful and shouldn't be done. And I agree, surprisingly, mainly because, and this has to do with, you know, a lot of parents in the world today, they don't want to do that kind of thing. And I agree. I think most parents in the world today should give up the whole spanking thing, try something else, do timeout, sit them in the corner, bargain, hire a diplomat, do something, get a mediator, you know, take it to court.

But, and here's why, it is a biblical, God-given, and highly effective means of training and motivation in the right hands. I would not give my fifteen-and-a-half-year-old daughter the keys to a Maserati and say, "Let's go learn to drive." I would be scared to sit behind the wheel of one of those myself, because I'm not a race car driver.

There are—they just auctioned, did you see this? They had a Stradivarius that Christie's just auctioned, and it went for some immoral amount of money. Genuine Stradivarius built in 17-whatever, and it was, what, two and a half million, something like that, that this guy bought it, and he's just going to rent it out to the greatest violinists in the world for performances, and he'll make his money back very soon. But I'm not going to be going down there and playing that thing, and neither are you, and neither is anybody we know, because it's—we are not qualified to play that kind of an instrument.

I wouldn't deserve an instrument like that. Just like, I used to fantasize that you might luck out and come across a guitar that had belonged to Chet Atkins or something, and I thought, that would be wasted on me. It would just be a rebuke every time I looked at it.

"You can't play like Chet. Why do you have me? Give me to somebody who can play," type of a thing, right? Well, it's the same. There are certain things that people really should not try because they're just not qualified, and if you are a spiritually healthy believer, there are many options that are open to you that are not open to an immature believer or to an unbeliever. There are tools, there are blessings, there are options, there are provisions of God's grace that are open and available if you are qualified to receive them and qualified to use them. If you're not, it's a dangerous thing to try them, to have them, to use them.

Remember the priests that tried to go up with their censers and offer the strange fire? Bad idea. Don't try to be a super-priest when you're not even a functional, basic-level priest. People who—what do they call it? The Peter Principle or something like that, where everybody rises one level above their competence? Not everybody, certain people.

We hope that a lot of us know when to quit and we don't become more than what God intended us to be. But honestly, if you think about it, you look at a lot of people who are parents today, spanking and any other kind of biblical discipline isn't going to work for them because they do not have the—they don't understand it. They don't have, for example, if you cannot control your anger, if you do not have self-discipline to be cold and calm and speak quietly and take your annoying, frustrating, disobedient child and sit them down and explain, "Do you remember the rule that we talked about this morning?" "Yes."

"What was that rule?" "Don't run in the house." "What were you doing just now?" "Running in the house." "What did I tell you would be the penalty this third time that you have run in the house after we discussed that? What was that rule again?" "Don't run in the house."

"What did I say would happen if you ran in the house?" "Get spanked." "Well, so what should happen now since you are running in the house?" You know, then you go through that whole thing. But it has to be instructive.

And it requires somebody with the self-discipline to not do it in anger or frustration or as an expedient. And most people don't have those qualities, and telling them, "Well, you should spank"—well, they're going to screw it up.

And not having self-discipline and trying to spank a child, you will be abusive and you will be inconsistent. And it will be wildly ineffective because you're just crashing the Maserati every time you get behind the wheel. You can't do that.

Many of the provisions in God's law, both Old Testament and New Testament, are designed for healthy, growing, God-oriented, functional believers. And people say, "Well, I tried that and it didn't work." Well, duh! You're not the kind of believer that God put those tools and provisions and gracious guidances in the hands of.

God didn't give those to you because you're not qualified. You are one that needs them done to you, not trying to go and do them to others. You have need that one give you milk and not solid food.

You have need that one teach you again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. You cannot go, for example, and be a missionary to other lands and spread the gospel when you yourself don't know the gospel and aren't living by the gospel and haven't got the first clue of what you're supposed to do after you respond to the gospel. It's insane.

These people at Jericho, these soldiers, are disciplined. They are faithful. They are obedient.

And look at the victory that God hands them. But, as is so often the case, reminds me of a joke that my cousin told me when I was a little boy, about 10 or 11 years old. And he said, "You know this joke I heard in school from my teacher today? He said, it takes 7,394 bolts to put a car together, but it only takes one nut to scatter them all over the road."

And you can do a lot of things right, and one mess-up can undo all of that. One, shall we say, dead fly floating in the punch kind of puts everybody off their thirstiness, right? One small thing can mess up a lot of good. In the Marine Corps there's a saying, which I can't really repeat, but a translation of it would be, "It only takes one oh-no to mess up a thousand attaboys."

You can have done a thousand things right, but if you do one thing wrong, people suddenly forget all those thousand things you did right. Those of us in business, especially in businesses that do support, know this to be the case. You could have been Hercules. You can have brought things in under budget, on time, it does wonderful things that no one has ever done before, but someone's going to go in and they can't bring up Solitaire, and they're going to go to the president of the company, and it's all going to come down around your ears.

This is what happens to Israel at Jericho. Look at chapter 7. The children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things.

It would be great if we all knew Hebrew. I won't inflict too much of it on you, but let me just tell you that here in Hebrew, this has the verb and the noun that are the same thing. It's ma'al, and it reminds me of Spanish. Malo, mal, bad, malfeasance, malpractice. Mal means bad in a lot of languages, and it means bad in Hebrew. They ma'al'd a ma'al. It literally says, "by yim ma'al u, b'nai Yisrael ma'al." They badded a bad. They disobeyed a disobedience. They faithlessly a faithlessness. I don't know a good way to render it. It says "committed a trespass," but it doesn't do it justice.

Anytime you have a thing repeated in Hebrew, it's very emphatic. They trespassed a trespass. They malfeasanced a malfeasance. It's really, they breached a trust. They were untrustworthy where they should have been trustworthy, is the idea. So one of the interlinear says they—they broke faith with a breaking of faith, and that's a pretty good rendering. The children of Israel broke faith in a breaking of faith. It's very emphatic.

Concerning the cherem, and you remember cherem is the untouchable, beyond-the-pale idea, and took. It's interesting because it says the children of Israel broke faith regarding the cherem, but then it says he took. It switches from the plural to the singular. Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, took from the cherem, and the Lord's nose became hot.

Remember that from Job? God's nose became hot against the children of Israel. One guy messed up, God is enraged against the entire nation. This is an interesting observation. Are we responsible for the sins of those in our periphery? Somewhat. Somewhat.

Remember when Paul the Apostle writes to the guy that has shacked up with his stepmother, and he holds the church accountable. He holds the Corinthian church's feet to the fire and says, "Why are you tolerating this?" They didn't say, "Well, but Paul, it's the privacy of each believer, you know, it's none of my business," and he's a member of the assembly; therefore, it becomes the assembly's business, because what he does reflects.

Same thing in a family. One person in a family does a thing, it reflects on the family; it's the family's business. Family can't say, "Well, you know, each of us does their own thing. I don't tell him what to do. He doesn't tell me what to do." There is the idea in Scripture of corporate responsibility.

Now, that is not a license to pry. It is not a license to bully, but it is a license to think in productive ways. How can I be a positive influence in this negative situation? I say again, it is not a license to pry, and it is not a license to bully, but if we become aware of something that's not right, we have to try to think of a constructive way to operate with that knowledge, and it takes discretion, it takes discernment. That's an opportunity, and again, it's not one of the things that you hand to a baby believer and have them go running off to the local newspaper and saying, "Well, this ought to be known."

Or I was reading recently about the Pueblo incident. I'd kind of forgotten, and somebody made reference to it just in the last couple of weeks. I think it was a church—somebody mentioned the Pueblo, and I thought, you know, I can't—I remember when that happened. I don't remember too much about it, so I went back and reviewed it.

You remember, there was a ship that was sailing off Korean waters that they claimed it was in territory. You know, sounds a little familiar with the Iranian-British hostage deal that we have currently. But those men were held, and they were held in captivity, and the Koreans were trying to get them to sign propaganda statements, trying to get them to do things that would be detrimental to the United States, and to a limited extent, they complied, because this is a part of your training.

You resist to the point where there is some serious bone-breaking and torture going on, and then you give in, and everybody understands you are not expected to hold out unto death in a POW situation. You resist as long as you possibly can, and when it just becomes impossible, do the bare minimum to get the pressure to ease up, and that's what these men did.

And so they would be filmed, and, you know, the commander said, "Well, yes, we were in waters," but he disguised his voice, and he spoke real slowly, and he tried to make it clear in the subtext that he was being forced to say what he said, and so on, and everybody kind of understood that.

Well, there was a point where they were filming these guys, and they were supposed to be shown happy, and that they agreed that this was all fair, but—and the Koreans believed that they were complying—but they were actually all doing an obscene gesture. If they had their hand on their face, or their hands in front, all of them had this obscene gesture, which the Koreans did not understand. And—but Americans immediately saw this and said, "Aha, they're resisting by every means possible without getting themselves in trouble."

Well, Time magazine printed an article and published that these guys were doing this irresponsible, stupid thing to print. Well, of course, the Koreans got a hold of the article and beat the daylights out of all of those prisoners for months and months and months. They called it Hell Week, the week that this article was published, and the North Koreans found out that they'd been—because, you know, they're big on face and that kind of thing—and they wailed the daylights out of them, and all because some overzealous, unthinking, immature person made a bad decision.

We have to think in these terms as believers. We can make poor decisions in immaturity that are going to hurt other people. It is our duty to grow for a lot of reasons. God calls us to maturity. He calls us to the standard of a mature man. We will be blessed. God's glory will be reflected, and believers in our periphery, the larger group, will be blessed. The converse is also true.

If you don't remember anything else from Joshua chapter 7, one bad apple can bring destruction on the entire army of Israel. Think how big this army is. All of these men faithfully marching silently, the trumpets blowing, the shouting, the going in. Nobody touched the devoted things. Everybody preserved Rahab. Nobody lost their head in the dust and the confusion and the shouting and the killing and the screaming and all of this.

It went perfectly except for one guy. One guy got greedy. One guy got selfish. One guy lost sight of the larger picture and just thought about himself.

God had given Moses the law 40 years earlier. They had 40 years to understand what cherem means. Everything in Jericho was declared cherem, under the ban, devoted to God exclusively. Anything you touch in there belongs to God.

This is sort of the view that I take with regard to offering. We don't talk about offering very often. To me, whether it's—I work for a Christian nonprofit organization. I've worked for a couple of them now. To me, every penny, every dollar that gets given as a gift to a church or to a Christian organization, that is a gift that that believer gave in good faith to God. They've dedicated that to God and to His work. That is cherem.

You had better be careful wearing your MOPP gear and your radioactive-proof lead suit if you're going to get anywhere near that which has been devoted to God, that which belongs to God. If every pastor and every ministry leader that gets a lot of money had that attitude, you wouldn't see gold bathtub faucets and a lot of the other excesses that have taken place in Christian ministry over the years.

These things in Jericho are God's possessions just as surely as if the cherubim had carried them down from God's third heaven. That's the respect with which they were to be treated. Achan didn't do that.

Achan—it's hard to know, the lexicon will say that they don't know what that word, what the root means in Hebrew, but it has come to mean troubler. It's just one of those words where you don't know which came first, the chicken or the egg, the troubler or the trouble. But his name in Hebrew means troubler. And nobody knows if it ever had a meaning before that. That's been lost.

He is the son of Carmi. Zabdi has the idea of gift. And so the combination of Achan and Zabdi, together you have trouble with regard to that which is given over to God. And the very names summarize. If you just said Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, it summarizes the whole problem. This guy has caused trouble with the cherem, Carmi, cherem, which is Zabdi. One source says it means my dowry, that which is given exclusively to me for my personal use. It has the idea of giving in its root.

So it's all wrapped up in these three names. And this is why a lot of people say, “Well, these are mythical names. They're made-up names for the poetry because they are so apt.” I don't think so. The Bible says that was his name. That was his name. And God, in His foresight, could see to it that somebody gets a name that is fitting.

Well, speaking of names, this is off the subject, but I'm going to tell you something about names sometime pretty soon. That's really fascinating. I'm not going to do it now. I'll tell you a little bit, and you can look this up if you want to. But I didn't realize this.

We went through our study on why the Bible and the origin of other religions. You know, the Hindu religion. Who is the—who is the big, big cheese in Hinduism? If you go way back, remember, remember Brahma, and Brahma has a consort called Saraswati or whatever.

Well, it turns out that Hinduism originated around 2000 B.C. when there was a man named Abraham. If you rearrange the letters of Abraham, you get Brahma. Abraham's wife's name was—Brahma's consort's name is Saraswati. And it turns out that Brahma lived near a river that's called like Hagar. And anyway, there's a whole litany of things. And it appears that actually the origins of Hinduism are corrupted memories of Abraham.

Hindu scholars, Hindu historians have gone back and said, “Well, Abraham, the Jewish Abraham, was actually from India.” And anyway, I'll give you all of that. It's—I don't have time to go into it now.

Names are significant. Names are important in the Bible. And God doesn't have to make them up after the fact. He's God. He can cause you to be named in the cradle something significant for later on. And that's what He does.

So Achan, Troubler, son of Carmi, which sounds an awful lot like cherem, starts with a different letter, starts with a K instead of a C-H. But the other letters are the same. My cherem, my devoted things, my gift, my what belongs to me, what is given over to me.

All of this is God's perspective. Here is the Troubler with regard to that. And the tribe is the tribe of—well, we'll get to that as we go through the casting of the lots. But it's the tribe of Judah. It's the tribe of Judah. What tribe is supposed to have the leadership? What tribe is supposed to be the most forward-thinking?

What example—what did Judah learn in Genesis over the course between the time that Joseph got thrown in the pit and Joseph became second in command in Egypt? Who was the one who offered himself in the place of his brother Benjamin? And this showed the progress. And this is what Judah was supposed to learn. Judah took the leadership and took the responsibility. He was looking out for his brothers.

Achan has that heritage. And of any possible tribe, this is the most inappropriate tribe to be from. Of the tribe of Judah, took of the cherem things, took of the devoted things. So the nose of the Lord became hot toward the children of Israel.

But there's no lightning. There's no opening of the earth and swallowing. Nothing has happened. God's anger is burning, but the shoe has not dropped yet. The axe has not fallen. This is the status. God has wrath that is as yet unfulfilled.

Now, we have that on hold. And in verse 2, Joshua sent men from Jericho to—we'll call it Ai. It's because that's how I learned it in Sunday school, and I'll never remember to say it any other way. Hai is basically how it goes in Hebrew. And it basically comes from a root that has the idea of sneezing. And once again, what's the picture of God's anger? His nose is hot. Where is that nose going to show itself? In sneeze town, in Ai. I think God just loves a good wordplay.

So Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, and spoke to them, saying, “On the east side of Bethel,” spoke to them, saying, “Go up and spy out the country.” All of these towns have great significance, don't they?

You remember Bethel? House of God. This is where Jacob, Israel, originally—what's the big thing that happened at Bethel? What promise did Jacob make there? “If you will be my God and deliver me safely through my troubles,” I'm paraphrasing here, “I will worship you and do what? I will give you a tithe of all my possessions.” You remember that promise? It was a vow, was it not? And it involved dedicating a portion to God. And the place that happened was Bethel. That's why it's mentioned here. It's not just a geographic location. It's a reminder of a promise, of obligation, and the whole concept of what it means for a thing to be dedicated to God.

He spoke to them, saying, “Go up and spy out the country.” So the men went up and spied out Ai. There is, by the way, a sort of side principle here. What did Joshua do before they went to Jericho? Did a recon. What did he do before they went to Ai? Did a recon.

If you want to make good decisions in life, arm yourself with the facts. If you're choosing a course of action, if you're going to upgrade the windows in your house, if you're going to choose a college, if you are going to buy a new car, if you are going to exercise any kind of stewardship, make any kind of policy or location or other kind of decision, get the facts.

Joshua didn't go to the tabernacle and say, “Oh, Lord, what shall we do in Ai? Oh, reveal Your will to me, dear God.” What did he do? He said, “I need some information. You guys go get the scoop and bring it back and tell me, and then we'll have information. We'll have facts that we can make a rational decision based on.”

You know the old thing, God helps those who help themselves. It's not Scripture, but there is a portion that we are supposed to do. You can't just sit and wait for everything to drop from the sky. Moses sent spies, Joshua sent spies, and now he's sending spies again. And the principle is, get information when you have to make a decision. Good decisions are based on good information.

What's the big quarrel with the war in Iraq? Our president made a decision based on bad information. This is the gripe. This is the alleged allegation, the alleged complaint. Well, the information was bad. Congress voted for it because the information was bad. Well, you know, the answer to that: if you didn't think the intelligence was too good, why didn't you look into it? Why did you just accept it and then come back and blame? Well, I won't get into that.

Good decisions are based on good information. If you're having trouble with making a decision, you need more information. If you're having trouble, God's will doesn't seem clear, get more facts. Send in more spies.

Joshua sent a man from Jericho to Ai, spoke to him, "Go spy it out." They went and spied on Ai, they returned to Joshua, and they said to him, "Don't let all the people go up. Let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai." By the way, I also have a big thing on thousand coming up. I'm going to do thousand and Abraham all in one go. Get the whole book of Genesis straightened out.

"Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few." And you really need those words in italics. That's what it means. Don't wear out the whole army. Let everybody else rest. Just send a sub-army, send a detachment up there. It's a small village.

So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they got whooped. Three thousand men, more than ample, to take this little village. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them down on the descent. Therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

I'll tell you right now that the two or three thousand is not two or three thousand. And we've got to go back into the whole vocabulary thing here for *eleph*. But these are army units, and I'll go through the pros and cons of this in the passages where *eleph* is used. But for our purposes, for the sake of argument for tonight, just drop that by a factor of ten. Two or three hundred.

Out of the two or three hundred that went—and we're not monkeying with Scripture, *eleph* has been misunderstood. It was misunderstood even in the days of the Septuagint. But this is more like about three hundred men went up there from the people. And about thirty-six were struck down, which is a significant loss. If you send three thousand guys and lose thirty-six, you're going to say, "Oh well, that's a shame." But a tiny village is not going to hold off—I don't care what you do. You can give them bazookas and nukes, and a village of a couple dozen people is not going to hold off three thousand men. But they did hold off three hundred, which was extraordinary. It was like a reversal of what happened at Jericho.

Struck them down on the descent, the hearts of the people melted and became like water. You could review Leviticus chapter 26 for the reason for this. God said, "One of you will put to flight a thousand if you're faithful. If you're unfaithful, a thousand of you will be put to flight by one."

Joshua tore his clothes, fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until evening, he and the elders of Israel, and they put dust on their heads. Joshua said, "Alas, Lord God, why have you brought us this people over the Jordan at all, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan. Oh Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, surround us, cut off our name from the earth. What will you do for your great name?"

This is key battle. Jericho and Ai is driving a wedge across the Canaanite countryside to keep these guys from banding together and overwhelming them. And they've been turned back by this minuscule group. It's hugely serious.

Now, why can Joshua pray this prayer and get away with it? Because in Joshua's mind, as far as he knows, they have been obedient to the letter. Joshua has been so careful. He did everything right in this horrible turnabout. And he says, "Lord, why did you bring us here if you're not essentially going to fulfill your promise?"

Notice, as soon as Joshua speaks and makes this complaint, he gets an answer. The Lord said to Joshua, "Get up. Why are you lying on your face? Israel has sinned."

Now, this is a rebuke. And it's one of the only places you can ever find God even hinting at a rebuke of Joshua. But it's really more of a formal rebuke than an actual personal rebuke. God basically says, "Joshua, you should have been able to figure this out."

If God has made a promise, it's a clear, distinct, unmistakable promise, and it is not fulfilled, you have to look at the conditions on that promise, right? If God has made a promise, and God never fails, but His promise is not being fulfilled, then something is the matter in terms of conditions for receiving that promise.

I've told you before, therefore I can tell you again without fear of revealing anything I haven't already revealed. But there was a time, a long time ago now, when I could not understand why I did not have provision. I was a seminary student. I was married. I had family burgeoning around me and bills left and right. And I was working like a Turk, and I could not pay my bills.

And I thought, "Lord, why have you brought me to Dallas only to turn my back in the face of the Amorites and be unable? What kind of a Christian testimony is it to not be able to pay my bills? Why did I come down here and do all of this if I can't pay my bills?"

And God did not speak to me. I didn't hear a voice. But in the course of studying, it suddenly dawned upon me: from the promise, and that promise is not being fulfilled, try checking out the conditions of the promise. When God said He would supply all of our needs according to His riches and glory, when does God not supply our needs? When we need to wake up, when we need to look around and make sure that we are in the faith, that we are walking in the light, that we have not abdicated responsibility.

And once I realized that this was God's attention-getting device, suddenly there is no provision where provision ought to be. God doesn't fail. God's not forgetful. So I have moved out from under the grace funnel here. What have I done?

And when I began to analyze, I discovered what the problem was. And I had gotten my priorities held up. And when I got that straightened out, suddenly, miraculously, promises were being fulfilled, and I didn't have logistical grace difficulties anymore.

It is an attention-getting device. Why does God allow Israel to be defeated? Why do three dozen men lose their lives? Does it succeed in getting their attention? Does it succeed in an effort to isolate and identify the problem and eradicate that problem? This is what we need to do.

There are times when we feel like our prayers are not being heard. Our prayers are not being answered. God's promises are not being fulfilled. It's like the old bumper sticker: "If God seems far away, who moved?" And it is incumbent on us to examine ourselves and see, why is it that God cannot fulfill His promise to me? What have I done? And it is always us. It is never Him.

"Behold, the arm of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear." Remember our memory verse? What is it? "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear." The Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save. His ear is not heavy that He cannot hear. It's our fault.

So this is why God says to Joshua, "Get up. Lying on your face and crying the blues to me isn't going to do any good. There's sin in the camp, and you should have been able to figure that out without me having to yell at you." Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them.

Notice, one man fouled up, but the whole nation is guilty. God works this principle in both directions. I don't have time to go there, but Paul talks about a family where there's only maybe one believer, and maybe there's an unequal yoke. There's a spouse, and he says, you know, you're free to separate, but God will bless the household for the sake of the one. God will spare Sodom for the sake of ten righteous. Hundreds of people get blessed because there's a few righteous. By the same token, many righteous people with a bad apple in the midst, cursing is going to come. It works both ways. There's blessing by association. There's cursing by association.

Now, be careful, because this is Israel. As goes the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, so goes the individual believer in the New Testament age. So what is this really saying? It's not like, "Well, my company's third quarter profits didn't rise to my expectations, so let's find somebody and fire them. There's a sinner in the ranks down there." Remember, it's us. It's our soul. The nation of Israel is our soul. There is an Achan in there.

A lot of our areas of life where we are being perfectly obedient and perfectly functional will suffer if there is one area in our life where we are allowing chereim to be abused. Things that belong to God and are devoted to God, if we have disobeyed, if we have broken faith with a broken faith, our whole domain of spiritual life can suffer because of this one thing.

We can be held back in a lot of areas, whether it is the function of our spiritual gift, whether it is the enjoyment of material blessings, whether it is the opportunities to engage in all kinds of productive spiritual harvests and be

a hundredfold field instead of a thirtyfold or twentyfold or tenfold or no-fold field, can depend on isolating this one thing.

One man among the multiple thousands in Israel has sinned. The entire nation can't move forward. Joshua and the rest of the armies of Israel cannot take another town until they get this one thing fixed. It is incumbent on us to examine ourselves and ensure that we are claiming God's cleansing grace, that we are being obedient in the things that belong to God.

So, here is the \$64,000 question. As a church-age believer, what are our devoted things? What is it that belongs to God that we could possibly be keeping back? We are not required to tithe money. We are not required to esteem one day above another. We have the Easter weekend here, Resurrection Sunday coming up. Should we do something special? There is always the question, should we do the Lord's Table or not on that day? Should we make it a super-holy day?

Yet, Scripture says in the New Testament, we esteem every day alike. We don't regard days and months and seasons. That is the law. That is the old thing. So, what is it exactly that is dedicated to God that we could possibly be holding back, or the devoted thing that we could be taking to ourselves?

Jesus gave us the answer to this. What are the great commandments? What is the first and greatest commandment? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. If you love a thing more than anything else, what do you do? You think about it. You devote time to it. You respect it. You honor it. You nurture it.

And that is our spiritual life. That is our fellowship with God. Do we care enough to call a halt to the dust and the shambles around us as the walls of Jericho are falling and remember that this is God's victory, that it's dedicated to God, that it's a part of God's plan and purpose, that He should get the glory, that it is about Him and not about us? Or do we feel the need to scoop up a few bars of silver and a few silks and take some spoil to ourselves?

It is that one area of disobedience that can neutralize a lot of other areas in our life. We can basically neutralize our whole spiritual army. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. It's principalities, powers, rulers, the darkness of this age. And we can render ourselves ineffective in that conflict if we don't do the Psalm 51 thing, the 1 John 1 thing. Look for the sin. Find the sin. Acknowledge the sin. Eradicate the sin. Judge ourselves so that we don't have to be judged. It's a very important principle.

We're out of time for tonight, so we'll pick it up and continue at Ai next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for this clear picture of our personal responsibility to ensure that just as the land of Canaan was to be purged of that which is unclean and did not honor You, even so we in our own souls have to do the same thing. We ask that God the Holy Spirit will remind us, and convict us, and encourage us as we seek to do it in our own souls in the days ahead so that our lives will reflect Your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus. We ask it in His name. Amen.