

JOSHUA 17
THE DANGER OF COMPLAINING!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 17 as we continue our study in this book that focuses on victorious Christian living!

Last week and for the next few weeks we are going to be looking at some of the dangers that are out there.

We saw last time that the children of Israel did not drive out the enemy completely but left some in the land. And, in the end, it was a thorn in their flesh and the Gentiles taught the children of Israel their ways, which led to the judgment of God and their captivity!

The key, as we saw, we need to fight the good fight of faith and crucify the flesh. We need to let the Lord destroy those areas that are holding us back, that are compromising our faith.

And this was a powerful example of what can happen when you don't deal with the enemies of our faith. They did not drive out the enemy and they paid for it!

And here's the thing. As long as we are in these bodies of flesh, we will have to deal with that flesh nature that tries to control our lives.

So the battle continues on. And, even though we may be tired, we may not want to fight, we may be tired of fighting, we must continue to battle on or that little compromise will grow, and it will eventually bring us down!

THEY DID NOT. . .! May that not be what happens in our lives. May we stand strong in the Lord and the power of His might and see the salvation He will bring to the battles we are facing. He will give us the victory, but we must step out in faith!

This morning we are going to look at another danger to our spiritual lives and really, if you think about it, to our physical lives as well. And that is complaining. In fact, I have called this study, ***THE DANGER OF COMPLAINING!***

Now don't start complaining about the study! Just kidding. But I do believe it is so easy to become an Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh.

You remember him, the grey donkey that complained all the time. If you don't remember him, maybe this will help. We are told,

"Eeyore, the old grey Donkey, stood by the side of the stream, and looked at himself in the water.

"Pathetic," he said. "That's what it is. Pathetic."

He turned and walked slowly down the stream for twenty yards, splashed across it, and walked slowly back on the other side. Then he looked at himself in the water again.

"As I thought," he said. "No better from THIS side. But nobody minds. Nobody cares. Pathetic, that's what it is."

There was a crackling noise in the bracken behind him, and out came Pooh.

"Good morning, Eeyore," said Pooh.

"Good morning, Pooh Bear," said Eeyore gloomily. "If it IS a good morning," he said. "Which I doubt," said he.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing, Pooh Bear, nothing. We can't all, and some of us don't. That's all there is to it."

"Can't all WHAT?" said Pooh, rubbing his nose.

“Gaiety. Song-and-dance. Here we go round the mulberry bush. . . . I’m not complaining, but There It Is.”

- <http://bit.ly/2TQEPSI>

Now we do laugh at Eeyore and the things that he says but are there times we act like Eeyore?

What I mean by that is that we are complaining about this and complaining about that and before you know it, that is the pattern of our life and it is not healthy physically and it is not healthy spiritually!

Let me share with you the physical problems that can come as we are complaining and it becomes a normal part of our life, ***THE DANGER OF COMPLAINING!*** We are told,

Repeated complaining rewires your brain to make future complaining more likely. Over time, you find it’s easier to be negative than to be positive, regardless of what’s happening around you. Complaining becomes your default behavior, which changes how people perceive you.

And here’s the kicker: complaining damages other areas of your brain as well. Research from Stanford University has shown that complaining shrinks the hippocampus - an area of the brain that’s critical to problem solving and intelligent thought. Damage to the hippocampus is scary, especially when you consider that it’s one of the primary brain areas destroyed by Alzheimer’s.

While it's not an exaggeration to say that complaining leads to brain damage, it doesn't stop there. When you complain, your body releases the stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol shifts you into fight-or-flight mode, directing oxygen, blood, and energy away from everything but the systems that are essential to immediate survival. One effect of cortisol, for example, is to raise your blood pressure and blood sugar so that you'll be prepared to either escape or defend yourself.

All the extra cortisol released by frequent complaining impairs your immune system and makes you more susceptible to high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. It even makes the brain more vulnerable to strokes.

- <http://bit.ly/2Z1LqiI>

But there are not only these physical aspects to complaining that are dangerous, there is also a danger to our spiritual lives, our spiritual health as we complain! You see, complaining is not a gift of the Spirit!

Now this is not some big theological revelation, it really is just common sense. What do I mean by that?

It is simple. If we are complaining about the wife, the husband, the kids, our job, the traffic, the lines in the store, the work that needs to be done at home, even the work that you have to do at church, what are you saying to God?

If God is in control of your life, if He knows everything that you are going through, when you are complaining about what is going on you are complaining against God!

And this is something that the Lord has been dealing with me on, this complaining. And it is so easy to lose focus and before long that is all you end up doing, complain about this, complain about that, and as others hear, what are they thinking about the God you serve?

What we will do this morning, as we have done in some of our previous studies, is I will give you an overview of the chapter, and then we will focus on the verses that we will be studying in depth this morning.

I have broken the verses down like this,

COMPLAINING – THEY THOUGHT TOO HIGHLY OF THEMSELVES – JOSHUA 17:14

SHOW YOURSELF STRONG – DO THE WORK INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING – JOSHUA 17:15

THE WORK IS TOO MUCH FOR US TO DO – JOSHUA 17:16

THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO WALK BY FAITH – JOSHUA 17:17-18

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Joshua chapter 17, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

And keep in mind that this is taking place after the major battles are over and now the land is being divided up between the children of Israel and they will have to defeat these pockets of resistance that are in the land that they will occupy!

JOSHUA 17**VERSES 1-11**

Again, the major battles are over and now the land is being divided up.

And we see here that the area of land that was given to the half tribe of Manasseh, the other son of Joseph.

Remember half the tribe of Manasseh remained on the east side of the Jordan River, outside the Promise Land.

But for the other half of this tribe, they entered the Promise Land and the area that was allotted to them was in the area of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, in the heart of the land, north of Ephraim with the Jordan River as its boundary to the east.

We also see here that the daughters of Zelophehad get their allotment of land. The land usually went to the men but because Zelophehad had no sons, his daughters brought their request to Moses and he said that they would get an allotment so that the name would continue on and the ancestral inheritance could be passed on.

That is what we see going on here. What Moses promised to them was now coming to pass.

VERSES 12-13

Again, they could not drive out the Canaanites but put them into forced labor. Folks, as I have said, and God keeps repeating, we should not set up a peaceful co-existence with our enemies, the flesh! The flesh must be crucified!

And, if we don't deal with those issues now, if we don't crucify the flesh, it will eventually bring us down as we see with the children of Israel.

Now let's read through Joshua 17:14-18 and then we will break it down and look at these verses in depth, looking at ***THE DANGER OF COMPLAINING!***

(Read Joshua 17:14-18)

When you look at these two tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, they were very large. Their combined number was greater than any other single tribe. Here, they complain that they have not been allotted adequate land. And, as you can see, they are complaining to Joshua.

So with the rest of our time this morning, we will be looking at four main points and my prayer is that we would leave here with hearts full of thanksgiving and praise unto our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all He has done in our lives, is doing in our lives and will do in our lives!

VERSE 14

I think you can see here that they are complaining before Joshua, they saw themselves as great and thus, they were not satisfied in what the Lord had given them.

As I have said when we opened up this study, this first point is simple –

COMPLAINING – THEY THOUGHT TOO HIGHLY OF THEMSELVES!

Think about what they are saying here.

“Are you kidding me Joshua! We are not some small tribe, insignificant group of people. We are descendants of Joseph, the one who spared the children of Jacob. Don't you remember that? We are a great people and you give us just one portion of the land. Come on, get real!”

I am paraphrasing of course, but essentially that is what they are saying.

Now let's think about that. They are complaining against Joshua but in reality, the Lord is the one who divided the land and ultimately, they are complaining against the Lord!

We tend not to think of it that way, but it is the reality.

Let me share this with you about complaining and you will see what I mean. We are told,

The Greek word translated “complainer” means literally “one who is discontented with his lot in life.” It is akin to the word *grumbler*. Complaining is certainly not a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and, in fact, is detrimental to the peace, joy, and patience that come from the Spirit.

For the Christian, complaining is destructive and debilitating personally and only serves to make our witness to the world more difficult. Who, for instance, would be attracted to a religion whose adherents are dissatisfied with life and who continually grumble and complain?

The first complainer was Adam who, after he and Eve disobeyed, complained to God that “the woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Genesis 3:12). The son of Adam, called Cain, also complained, although undoubtedly within himself (Genesis 4:6).

We also know of the complaints made by Moses, when he met God at the burning bush (Exodus 3-4). Also, Moses cried to the Lord repeatedly for deliverance from the Israelites' grumbling and idolatry (Exodus 17:4; 32:31-32).

We also know of the complaints that David offered up to the Lord in the Psalms (Psalm 2:1; 12:1-2; 22:1) and the complaints made by the prophets concerning the idolatry of the Jewish nation.

However, the book of Job offers the most in the way of complaints toward God, and yet Job did not sin (Job 1:22, 2:10). That is not to say that the aforementioned people never sinned in voicing their complaints to God, but Job was a man who was able to sanctify his complaints, and that took humility.

Clearly, as believers we are challenged not to grumble or complain (Philippians 2:14-15; 1 Peter 4:9); rather, we are to love one another deeply so that we may become “blameless and pure” in God’s eyes.

If we grumble and complain, it shows how worldly we still are (James 4:1-3). A complaining spirit leads to fighting and quarrelling because complaints come from unfulfilled desires, which lead to envy and strife. Was that not at the root of the problem with the sons of Israel, when they chose to dispose of their brother Joseph, because of his dream (Genesis 37:3)?

Finally, while it is not wrong to complain to God, it is wrong to complain about God. Those that did so met the anger of the Lord, as was the case of Moses’ sister Miriam (Numbers 12) and Korah and Dathan (Numbers 16).

But note that they spoke against God’s servant and, in doing so, spoke against God Himself.

If we must complain, let it be to Him about our own sinfulness so that He will forgive and cleanse us (1 John 1:9) and put within us a new heart, one that rejoices rather than complains.

- <http://bit.ly/30gUYmM>

I think that is a good perspective to have. When we complain about this and that we are complaining to God about all that we don't have or all that is happening to us and we, in a sense, are blaming Him for the misfortunes we are having.

Now most of us would not think of it like that, but it is true. Yes, we can bring our complaints to God, but we need to leave them there, at His feet, and be thankful that our God not only listens to our hearts cry, but He will answer our request as well.

The answer may not be what we want, but He will answer our requests we bring before Him.

Now, in saying that, do we spend more time complaining to God about all these things instead of being thankful for all that God has given to us? Something that each of us need to look at and examine our hearts to see where we are at.

Let me show you the foolishness of our complaining with this story. We are told,

Entering a department store, a little old lady was startled when a band began to play and a dignified executive pinned an orchid on her dress and handed her a crisp hundred dollar bill.

She was the store's millionth customer. Television cameras were focused on her and reporters began interviewing.

"Tell me," one asked, "just what did you come here for today?"

The lady hesitated for a minute, then answered, "I'm on my way to the Complaint Department."

- Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, 747

As funny as that is, isn't that what we are doing when we are complaining? God has given to us so much and we complain!

And we may think too highly of ourselves. “Why is this happening to me? I love the Lord; I am serving the Lord. I am involved in so many ministries, and then this! How can this happen?”

We are servants of Christ and we deserve nothing and if we looked at our life like that, we would realize that yes, we deserve nothing, but Christ has given us so much.

Spurgeon put it like this, “You say, ‘If I had a little more, I should be very satisfied.’ You make a mistake. If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled.” How true that is!

He also wrote, “A man’s contentment is in his mind, not in the extent of his possessions. Alexander the Great, with all the world at his feet, cries for another world to conquer.” So true!

The problem, ***COMPLAINING – THEY THOUGHT TOO HIGHLY OF THEMSELVES!***

So here is this problem, the children of Joseph are thinking too highly of themselves and look at what Joshua tells them, the solution to the problem.

VERSE 15

Did you see what Joshua is telling them? He did not call them losers, lazy, proud, unthankful or anything else. He just told them what to do – ***SHOW YOURSELF STRONG – DO THE WORK INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING!***

I think that is interesting. The solution to complaining is getting to work. Instead of complaining, just serve the Lord and you won’t have time to complain. And, in reality, the focus is now taken off of our own lives and it is focused on ministering to others. We just don’t have time to complain, as I have said!

Joshua is basically telling them, “Okay, you see yourselves as a great people, then here is your opportunity to prove it! Here is the land that God has given you, go and take it! Do what Caleb did and defeat the giants in the land and claim the mountains!”

Remember when we looked at Caleb and we saw that he did not complain, he did not look for an easy way out, but when the land was divided up, he told Joshua he wanted the land in the mountains with the giants in them.

How could he do that? I mean really, he was eighty years old and yet, he was not going to win this battle in the power of his own strength but in the power of God because he knew that God had already given them this land, they just needed to walk by faith!

And for these sons of Joseph, they wanted the easy way out. And please understand, they wanted the bigger ministry, they wanted all the attention, but they just did not want to do the work! They did not take the land that God had given to them and yet they wanted even more.

That is not how it works. We must walk one step at a time and as we walk God will give us more land you might say, more areas for us to serve in.

The principle applies just as strongly for us today - before we ask God for more let's be faithful to the responsibilities that He has already given us.

Alan Redpath summed it up like this. He wrote, “Stop crying for greater opportunities until you have done the work in the place that God has allotted to you. Is your home sweeter and lovelier and more radiant because you are a Christian? If not . . . drive out the enemy [there first] for if we fail in the small portion allotted to us God can never trust us with greater.”

I hope that makes sense to you. Think about it. Are you really going to sail across the ocean to be a missionary in some foreign country when you are not even witnessing in your home, neighborhood, workplace and so on? I don't think so!

Again, as we complaining about our spouse, our job, our ministry, our health, our finances or whatever it may be, understand that God has given these things or has allowed these things into our lives and when we complain we are complaining against what He is doing in our lives!

Isn't God orchestrating the things that happen in my life?

Of course He is!

Isn't God aware of all that is happening to me?

Of course He is!

Isn't God using all that happens to me for my good?

Of course He is!

Then what is the problem!

Me! That is the problem. I am not walking by faith. I am not trusting in the Lord.

Let me give you an example from the Scriptures and I think you will see what I mean about complaining not only being against God but how it is detrimental to our lives!

In Numbers chapter 21 the children of Israel are making their way to the land of Canaan, but not there yet. And we see in the southern part of the land the king of Arad hears of where the children of Israel are going and he comes out to fight against them, taking some prisoners with him.

Now, instead of complaining they bring it to the Lord and the Lord gives them the victory over this enemy.

They utterly destroyed the city, so much so that they called it Hormah or destruction.

We now see them walk by faith and not by sight. They are trusting in the Lord. They are learning faith lessons!

But then we see a problem. They are going to have to travel back into the wilderness and they were not happy.

Here's the thing. Was God aware of what was happening to them? Of course He was, He was the One directing them!

And look at what transpired. They began to complain!

This led to questioning God's ability to lead them because the journey was long and difficult.

From there, their questioning of God's guidance led to complaining about God's goodness. (Numbers 21:5)

Listen to what we are told in Numbers 21:4-5, **"Then they journeyed from Mount Hor 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. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.'"**

God gave them this great victory against the king of Arad and now, they have forgotten about that and they are complaining against God!

And because of their complaining and questioning God's ability to lead them, the judgment of God fell upon them. We are told in Numbers 21:6, **"So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died."**

God sent these fiery serpents upon them and I believe that when it says they were fiery, it speaks of the intense burning pain that was felt when they were bit!

And because of unbelief, because of their complaining against God, many of the children of Israel died, probably the last of that older generation that was to die in the wilderness and possibly even some of the next generation.

They did not walk by faith but complained and God judged them!

How can we apply this to our own lives?

Simple. As we start to question God's ability to lead our lives because of the situations that we are facing, and we become discouraged or even impatient, we begin to complain!

We start questioning the goodness of God?

"God, if you really loved me You would not allow me to go through this! I deserve so much more than this mess, I am a good person, I love you and then, this! I look at others and I see all the blessings that they are getting, what about me? If You are really a good and loving God, you would not allow this in my life!"

Imagine if you said something like that to your spouse, how would they like it?

They wouldn't, of course!

And God does not like it either!

Either He is God over all of your life, or He is not God at all in your life! I am not saying that you lose your salvation here, but you lose that intimacy with God because all you are doing is complaining instead of being thankful for all He has done, is doing and will do in your life, as I have said already!

Let me share a few verses with you to show you what should flow from our hearts and lives.

First of all, Paul tells us in Philippians 2:14-16, **“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”**

How many things are we to do without complaining? We are to do **“all things without complaining.”**

In Deuteronomy 1:26-27, as Moses is reviewing the history of the nation of Israel, speaking of their refusal to enter into the Promise Land, we are told, **“Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; and you complained in your tents, and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.’”**

Just as they complained back then, they complained in Paul’s day and Christians do the same today!

And the idea here, I believe, is complaining and disputing against God, which then leads to complaining and disputing with each other.

Keep in mind that Paul is speaking of unity through humility and thus, there is no unity with complaining and disputing with each other.

And I can tell you this. If you are struggling with people, check your relationship with the Lord because if you are complaining against Him, then you are probably complaining and disputing against others!

I think we know this one from I Thessalonians 5:16-18, where Paul tells us, **“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”**

Notice that Paul doesn't say to rejoice when things are going well but to rejoice always!

How can we do that?

Because, as Christians our joy is not based in outward circumstances but in the Lord and He never changes.

That is what Habakkuk found out as he said, **“Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.”** Habakkuk 3:17-19.

Now here is what I want to focus on because it is difficult, and it is what Paul says in verse 18 here in I Thessalonians chapter 5.

How in the world can I give thanks in everything?

The only way we can is by knowing and believing that, **“... all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse, Romans 8:28 like this, **“We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.”**

Does that mean we will always know the good that will come out of a difficult situation?

No, we must learn to trust God by faith, to rest our weight fully upon Him!

God is still on the throne, He is still in control, and nothing happens without His knowledge!

And here is the key to all of this; rejoicing always, praying without ceasing, giving thanks in everything to God, it is God's will for our lives, and it is not that we have to do it, but we get to do it! And as you do, there is no room for complaining!

Make no mistake about it, we are to serve the Lord with gladness. In Psalm 100 we see this played out for us. We are told, **“Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.”**

Notice what the Psalmist is saying. *“Serve the Lord with gloominess!”*

No, he did not say that!

We are to serve the Lord with gladness.

Now here's the thing. If you can't serve the Lord with gladness, then don't serve Him.

Listen to how it sounds if we do change some of the words of Psalm 100. Now we would never do that but if our words and actions go against what God is saying here in this Psalm, then something is wrong with us!

This is not what this Psalm says but again, listen to how this sounds, and it is not good.

“Make a loud complaint to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gloominess; Come before His presence with complaining. Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with unthankfulness, And into His courts with complaints. Be unthankful to Him, and put down His name. For the Lord is not nice; His mercy is short-lived, And His truth endures to some but not to me.”

That is not what this Psalm is saying but many times it is what we can sound like!

How does God want us to enter into His presence?

We don't have to guess for the Psalmist tells us that we are to, **“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”**

Coming to worship the Lord should be a celebration not a funeral!

The best way to enter into the Lord's presence is by thanking Him for what He has done and praising Him for who He is.

As the Psalmist closes, he speaks of God's mercy being everlasting. I am thankful for that. But not only is His mercy everlasting but His truth endures to all generations. That means what God has said in the Bible is for us today just as it was for the people when it was written.

There is no room for me to complain when I see all that God has done!

Instead of complaining, ***SHOW YOURSELF STRONG – DO THE WORK INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING!***

But things can seem overwhelming to us and that is what we will look at next, ***THE WORK IS TOO MUCH FOR US!***

VERSE 16

As we read in Joshua 17:15, Joshua tried to encourage them in this work, in taking the land that God had given to them.

But as they looked at the task that was before them, it was overwhelming. There were giants in the land. They had chariots. It was just too much and maybe they were just too tired to fight anymore.

Whatever the case, it was too much for them to handle.

How many of you have felt that way before? God has told you what He wants you to do and you are excited.

And then the reality sets in. ***“What in the world am I thinking, I can’t do that!”***

Here’s the reality, you can’t!

If God has called you to do something, when we try to accomplish it in the power of our strength, we are going to fail!

When the Lord called me to Wisconsin to be a pastor, I was confident in what He told me. There was no doubt in my mind, none at all!

And then, some ten or eleven years after He told me what He was going to do, Julie came home from the Women’s Retreat in Indiana with the information about a church in Manitowoc, Wisconsin that needed a pastor, as their pastor stepped down! And she gave me the phone number of one of the elders to call.

And I have to admit, at first, excitement, and then, ***“What in the world am I going to do? I can’t do this. I have to get a job. I have to sell my house. I have to buy a house in Wisconsin. I have to . . .”*** Fear gripped my life even though I knew what God had called me to do!

And what was my problem?

It was an “***I***” problem.

I had left God out of the picture and that is never a good thing and what it does is it leads to fear, hopelessness, and-so-on!

Once I focused back on the Lord, His calling in my life, it changed everything, and the rest is history. He did what He said He promised me and more than I could ever imagine!

So I am not going to spend too much time here, in fact I am going to finish this up, ***THE WORK IS TOO MUCH FOR US***, because that is the truth!

Remember what Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**”

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ’s sufficiency].**”

That is the reality folks. What we do for the Lord, the things He tells us to do, He will equip us to accomplish these things.

And it doesn’t matter if it is a huge task or a small task, we need His help to accomplish these things as He desires and not as we desire!

And that really leads us to the last point, ***THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO WALK BY FAITH***. Let’s read on and see how this is played out and who is going to encourage them to go and take the land that was given to them.

VERSES 17-18

I love how this is played out. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were fearful, they did not believe that they could gain this victory, they did not believe that they could defeat these giants!

And what does Joshua do?

Listen again carefully!

He told them, “**... ‘You are a great people and have great power; you shall not have only one lot, but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it is wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong.’**”

Joshua is encouraging them to take those steps of faith, or, as I have called these verses, ***THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO WALK BY FAITH!***

He is another wonderful thing about our Lord. He not only calls us to a work, He not only equips us for what we are to do, but He also encourages us to go forward, to walk by faith! Our Joshua encourages us!

How awesome is that!

I will show you how this plays out by letting you in on a little secret that I don't think most of you are aware of.

We have been doing Vacation Bible School for nine years now, next year will be our tenth year! It is amazing how fast time goes by.

And when this was presented to me, over nine years ago, to put on a Vacation Bible School, I really felt the Lord calling us to do this. That was not the problem.

The problem was that I am uncomfortable being in front of people, even kids and doing a Vacation Bible School where I had to be in front and not only teach them but sing and dance, that was even more scary to me! You know how much rhythm I have and the key I sing in, ***ALL OF THEM!*** You laugh, but I think it is true!

But you know how the Lord puts something on your heart and He is encouraging you to take those steps of faith, and I am sure I was thinking, ***“Lord, are you sure that you want me to do this?”*** I was sure but I was still nervous.

And each and every year the Lord has blessed the children and all the workers!

But I can tell you, it is like teaching on Thursday’s or Sunday’s, the enemy loves to discourage and he was doing that with Vacation Bible School to me.

And I am learning that as the Lord calls you, as He equips you, as He encourages you, He will see you through and He will accomplish what He wants, and I can rest in that and I am sure you feel the same way, as difficult as the calling may be!

I want to show you, from the Scriptures, how God encourages us. And I truly believe that God loves to encourage us in the work, we just need to listen and then obey!

In Judges chapter 6 we see the story of Gideon, a judge in Israel. And he is an interesting man, probably a lot like you and me. Not much confidence in himself.

And in Judges 6:12-18 we are told, **“And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, ‘The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!’ Gideon said to Him, ‘O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, “Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.’ Then the Lord turned to him and said, ‘Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?’ So he said to Him, ‘O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.’ And the Lord said to him, ‘Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.’ Then he said to Him, ‘If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You.’ And He said, ‘I will wait until you come back.’”**

Did you see what the Lord called Gideon? **“You mighty man of valor!”**

And what did Gideon tell the Lord? **“O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”**

Isn’t that the way we see it in our own lives? It is for me and I am sure, if you were honest with yourselves, you feel the same as Gideon!

And, as God called Gideon, encouraged Gideon, I believe He does the same with us!

What has the Lord put upon your heart, called you to do, and yet, you have put it on the back burner? Maybe you are waiting for some big sign in the sky or some voice to call to you!

But doesn’t God speak through His Word? Of course He does.

And, doesn't God speak to us through circumstances or situations and makes it perfectly clear what we need to do? You bet He does.

I have seen that over and over again. I have talked about Vacation Bible School, that was God speaking to me and opening that door, but I needed to walk by faith!

The same is true with Him calling me up to Wisconsin. He opened the door, but I needed to walk by faith.

And the wonderful thing is that He is always encouraging me, He is always encouraging you to go forward, to take those steps of faith and see what He will do in you and through you for His glory!

Keep in mind that there is no weak tool in the hands of God. And there is no small calling in his perfect plans. You were created to live a life that changes the world. You were created for a destiny that draws the lost back into the fold of our heavenly Father. But in order to accomplish the life to which you were called you will need courage. You will need time spent in God's presence being filled with his encouragement and then walk by faith!

It is as Psalm 90:17 says, "**And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.**"

Moses is asking God to allow His beauty to be seen in us and to work through us. How beautiful that truly is. That our walk or our life, all that we would do would be fruitful and bring glory to God!

As Moses said, "**And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.**"

In other words, "*Lord, do something in my life that will touch the lives of people on earth and have value in eternity!*" May that be our hearts desire!

Look at what we have seen this morning.

COMPLAINING – THEY THOUGHT TOO HIGHLY OF THEMSELVES!

SHOW YOURSELF STRONG – DO THE WORK INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING!

THE WORK IS TOO MUCH FOR US!

THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO WALK BY FAITH!

Let me close with this story that will tie this up for us. We are told,

My car broke down and it cost \$400 to get it fixed . . . \$400 that I did not have. Why me, Lord? After all, I've been as good as most people. In fact, I've been better than most. Why are you treating me this way? Why are you punishing me this way?

Then the TV went on the blink, and so did the dishwasher, and the clothes dryer, and the lawn mower, and even the iron! Why me, Lord? Besides that, why, at my age, should I still be having financial problems? Why am I not "set" financially like some others I know? Why have you denied me opportunities for fame and fortune that you have given to others? Why me, Lord?

When I find myself starting to think like this, it sometimes helps for me to ask the same questions about other aspects of my life. Lord, what have I done that's so grand that you should have blessed me with a car, a TV set, a clothes dryer, a lawn mower, and an iron? Why did you give me all these things anyway? Why me, Lord?

Lord, why did you permit me to be born in America with all its plenty? I could have been born in poverty-stricken Bangladesh instead of in rich America. Why me, Lord? Lord, why did you give me the opportunity to have a job when so many, who are as deserving as I, are without work? Why me, Lord?

Lord, why did you give me good health? Others died at my age of heart attacks or are crippled by accidents or disease. Why should I escape ill health when other religious people do not? Why me, Lord? Lord, why have you spared me from the sorrows that strike so many other families? Others, wonderful people, have lost close relatives, but I haven't. Why me, Lord?

When I think of all the ways the Lord has blessed me, though I don't deserve it, I wonder how I could possibly complain about the relatively insignificant things that go wrong in my life from time to time. If I could only learn to count my blessings!

- A Treasury of Bible Illustrations

Instead of complaining, let's have hearts filled with thanksgiving to the Lord and see the work that He has for us, and step out in faith and see what He will do!