

**JOSHUA 21-22**  
**THE DANGER OF CONFLICT!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Joshua chapter 21 as we continue our study through this very applicable book on victorious Christian living.

Last time we looked at the cities of refuge that were scattered throughout the land of Israel. Three on the east side of the Jordan River, outside the Promise Land. And three on the west side of the Jordan River, in the Promise Land or the land of Canaan.

And we looked at how these cities of refuge were a picture of Christ. How we can run to Him and receive life even though our sins condemn us, He has paid in full the penalty for them and we can take shelter in the shadow of His wings!

Now, prior to that study we were looking at the dangers that are out there, dangers we need to avoid.

You see, for the children of Israel, the main battles were over and now the land was divided up between the twelve tribes of Israel. And within the land were pockets of resistance, the enemy, that needed to be driven out.

And in our first study on these dangers we looked at the danger of comixing with the enemy and the reality was, ***THEY DID NOT*** obey the Lord.

And how important it is for us to understand that what the Lord is telling us is to help us grow, keep us safe. But they did not see it that way and they left these pockets of resistance in the land, they left the enemy in the land with them.

Now it may have sounded like a good idea because they used them as forced laborers. But in the end, the pagan practices of these people became the practices of the children of Israel.

You see, you will become what you fill your life with, who you hang around with! Paul warned us in II Corinthians 6:14-18, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.’”**

The key here is that the Lord is telling us to come out from among them, to separate ourselves from them or we will become like them. ***THE DANGER OF COMIXING!*** (Joshua 15-16)

Then we looked at ***THE DANGER OF COMPLAINING*** and this is a big deal today when self is the focus in our lives many times.

And we looked at how the children of Joseph complained about all that they did not have. They thought that they were too important, too big of a tribe not to have this.

And Joshua told them that if they want the land, they need to go and take it and stop complaining!

Alan Redpath put it like this as 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.” Absolutely!

And yes, the work may be great, it may seem overwhelming, but the Lord is calling us to walk by faith and trust in His promises to us. And as we do, we will stop complaining and we will serve the Lord with gladness! ***THE DANGER OF COMPLAINING!*** (Joshua 17)

From there we looked at ***THE DANGER OF COMPLACENCY!*** And for us, it is just settling down, not moving forward in the Lord, and it is a dangerous place to live!

Proverbs 1:28-33 puts it like this, **“Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord, They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them; But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil.”**

Here’s the thing. If you stop moving forward for the Lord where you stop reading your Bible, stop spending time with Him in prayer or stop serving Him in ministry, you won’t see the effects right away, but you will in time.

There was a concert pianist who made this point as he said, “If I stop practicing the piano, the first day there won’t be any difference in my playing; the second day there will be a slight difference; and by the third day it will become noticeably different.”

God has called us to move forward, to follow Him, to take back the land that the enemy has, and we need to obey! ***THE DANGER OF COMPLACENCY!*** (Joshua 18)

This morning we are going to finish this section of dangers by looking at ***THE DANGER OF CONFLICT!*** (Joshua 22)

And here's the thing about conflict. When there is false teaching, living in sin, it needs to be dealt with, not ignored.

But sometimes there is a misunderstanding and we need to get all the facts before we do something we might regret!

We will be looking at both of those points in our study this morning!

Let me share this with you and you will see how silly things can grow into fights, battles, divisions in the church. I am not speaking about in the world, but in the church.

And it can be as silly as what color the carpet in the church is, or what color the walls are to do you receive an offering or do you just have a collection box at the back of the church? And believe me, churches have divided over these and many other foolish issues.

But, when it comes to doctrine or false teaching in the church, people let that go, it does not seem to be a big issue anymore!

Listen carefully to what some of these foolish things are that church members are fighting over.

We are told,

It began as an innocuous Twitter survey. But then it blew up.

A lot of church members and leaders were eager to share about fights, schisms, and conflicts in their congregations. They were likewise eager to point out the absurdity of these issues. There were the ones we've heard often: temperature in the worship center, color of carpet, order of worship, and color of walls.

The fights shown below, however, are a bit unusual. Indeed, most of them are downright absurd. I picked 25 of my "favorites." They are listed in no particular order. The parenthetical commentary is my own.

**Argument over the appropriate length of the worship pastor's beard** (*I think I saw a verse in Scripture that indicated it is to be no more than 1.5 inches longer than the pastor's beard.*)

**Fight over whether or not to build a children's playground or to use the land for a cemetery** (*I'm dying to know the resolution of this one.*)

**A deacon accusing another deacon of sending an anonymous letter and deciding to settle the matter in the parking lot** (*The church could have sold tickets to this event and raised a lot of money.*)

**A church dispute of whether or not to install restroom stall dividers in the women's restroom** (*I'm calling unfair on this one. The men should have their stall dividers too.*)

**A church argument and vote to decide if a clock in the worship center should be removed** (*I think this one is a timely argument.*) [What's the point of a clock, I don't use it!]

**A 45-minute heated argument over the type of filing cabinet to purchase: black or brown; 2, 3, or 4 drawers** (*This one is an official cabinet meeting of the church leadership.*)

**A fight over which picture of Jesus to put in the foyer** (*I just want to know who took the pictures.*) . . .

**A big church argument over the discovery that the church budget was off \$0.10. Someone finally gave a dime to settle the issue** (*I have to admit this issue is ten times more important than the church missing a penny.*)

**A dispute in the church because the Lord's Supper had cran/grape juice instead of grape juice** (*Of course it should be grape juice. It's right there in Hezekiah 4:11.*)

**Business meeting arguments about whether the church should purchase a weed eater or not. It took two business meetings to resolve** (*Wow. This fight was really whacky.*)

**Arguments over what type of green beans the church should serve** (*I could have resolved this conflict quickly: none.*)

**Two different churches reported fights over the type of coffee. In one of the churches, they moved from Folgers to a stronger Starbucks brand. In the other church, they simply moved to a stronger blend. Members left the church in the latter example** (*Perhaps they started a new church: The Right Blend Fellowship.*)

**Major conflict when the youth borrowed a crockpot that had not been used for years** (*I bet it was a bunch of crocky old adults.*)

**An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs at the church meal** (*Only if it's balanced with angel food cake for dessert*)

**An argument over who has the authority to buy postage stamps for the church** (*The members were licking their wounds over this issue.*)

**A disagreement over using the term “potluck” instead of “pot blessing”** (*I get it! The concept of luck contradicts the theology of a sovereign God. This issue is very serious. Good luck trying to resolve it.*) . . .

**Some church members left the church because one church member hid the vacuum cleaner from them. It resulted in a major fight and split** (*Thus the Second Electrolux Church was born.*)

**An argument over whether to have gluten-free communion bread or not** (*I thought gluteny was a sin.*) . . .

**An argument over whether the fake, dusty plants should be removed from the podium** (*Just give them a little water. They should be fine.*)

Yes. These issues are silly; many are absurd. But they are all distractions from what we should be doing in our churches. In that sense, they are really great distractions from the Great Commission.

- <http://bit.ly/2khNr7D>

Hopefully, as we go through this study, we will see what to do and what not to do. Because, as we can see even in the church, the focus is so much about self that we miss what the Lord wants us to do!

And, like in our previous few studies with the division of the land, I will give you an overview of what is going on and then we will focus on the verses we will be digging into this morning dealing with ***THE DANGER OF CONFLICT!***

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Joshua chapter 21 beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study through His Word.

**JOSHUA 21****VERSES 1-3**

Remember that the tribe of Levi did not get an inheritance in the land because the Lord was their inheritance. But they were to get 48 Levitical cities spread throughout the land, given to them by the various tribes, but it was not their inheritance. And from these Levitical cities they would teach the children of Israel the things of God!

As we move on, we will see Joshua divide up these 48 Levitical cities between the three families of Levi.

The Kohathites were the priestly family from which Aaron and Moses came from. Their function was to care for the Tabernacle and to bear the Ark and the sacred vessels.

The Gershonites were in charge of the fabrics of the Tabernacle, the covering's, curtains, hangings, and cords.

The Merarites were in charge of the planks, bars, pillars, and sockets of the Tabernacle.

But now these 3 divisions would be spread throughout the land with the Kohathites staying in the area where the Temple would be built in the future!

**VERSES 4-26 (Overview)**

For the Kohathites, they had 23 cities.

Nine were located in the tribes of Judah and Simeon including Hebron, which was a city of refuge.

Four of these cities were located in the tribe of Benjamin.

We also see ten more cities located in Ephraim, Dan and western Manasseh, including another city of refuge, which is located in Shechem.

#### VERSES 27-33 (Overview)

For the Gershonites, they had thirteen cities located in eastern Manasseh, Issachar, Asher and Naphtali.

They also had two cities of refuge which were located in Kedesh, which is in the land of Naphtali, and Golan which is located on the east side of the Jordan River in the area of Manasseh.

#### VERSE 34-40 (Overview)

For the Merarites, they had twelve cities in the area of the tribes of Zebulun, Ruben and Gad.

They also had two cities of refuge, Ramoth, which is located in the area of Gad, and Bezer, which is located in the area of Ruben.

#### VERSES 41-42

Thus, we see thirty-eight cities given to the descendants of Levi on the west side of the Jordan River, and ten cities located on the east side of the Jordan River, forty-eight in all.

It has been estimated that no one in Israel lived more than ten miles from one of these forty-eight Levite cities.

Thus, they were close to a man who knew the law of God and to give them Godly counsel.



What a remarkable conclusion to this chapter, that, “**Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.**” Joshua 21:45.

Yes, God gave them all the land but tragically they didn’t take all that God had given to them!

As we move into chapter 22 this morning, we are going to see how Civil War almost broke out between the children of Israel living on the west side of the Jordan River and those living on the east side of the Jordan River.

I have broken these verses down into five main points. They are as follows,

***OVERVIEW – JOSHUA 22:1-9***

***THE CONFLICT – JOSHUA 22:10***

***DEAL WITH THE CONFLICT – JOSHUA 22:11***

***REMOVE IT***

***EXAMINE IT***

***THE EXPLANATION – JOSHUA 22:21-29***

***THE HEALING/CELEBRATION – JOSHUA 22:30-34***

## **JOSHUA 22**

### **VERSES 1-9**

Here we see that Joshua is releasing the soldiers from Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh from their military service and allowing them to return home to their families on the east side of the Jordan River.

They had fulfilled their promise serving with their brethren these last seven years and defeating the enemies in the land that God had given to the children of Israel, the land of Canaan.

But before Joshua dismisses them, he warns them to hear God's Word, to love the Lord and to walk in His ways.

The key is this. You need to **HEAR, LOVE, OBEY** and you will do well!

And things looked like they were going well, but now we see **THE CONFLICT!**

#### VERSE 10

As these 2½ tribes head home after some seven years of war, helping the rest of the tribes who were living on the west side of the Jordan River, in the Promise Land, gain the land that they would dwell in, they do something that just does not seem Kosher!

You see, as they head home, they built an altar, maybe very similar to the brazen altar where the sacrifices were made.

If it was similar it stood about 4½ feet high and 7½ feet squared and it was located on the east side of the Jordan River for all to see!

It may have even been bigger for it says that they built “**... a great, impressive altar.**”

And here is the conflict and we will see this played out as the children of Israel hear about this, as they see this altar and now, they have to decide what to do with it.

And that is our next point, **DEAL WITH THE CONFLICT**. And in this section, we are going to look at two main points. They are, **REMOVE IT** and **EXAMINE IT**.

VERSES 11-20

Here we see that when the children of Israel living in the Promise Land find out what they did, well, Civil War almost breaks out!

Now you may be thinking, *“Why did they respond like this?”*

The answer is simple. The reason they acted like this is because they saw this altar as an act of rebellion against God. They were not to set up an altar of sacrifice anywhere they wanted. The altar was to only be set-up in the Tabernacle and now they are going against what God has said and they set up this altar!

And they knew that if this act of rebellion was not dealt with, it could affect them as well! So they were not going to just stand by and ignore what they were doing!

Thus, the children of Israel living in the Promise Land were ready to go to war over this, a war against their brethren that they just spent seven years fighting together against their enemies!

Make no mistake about it, they were standing up for holiness, they were standing up for the things of God and they were willing to go to war over it!

That is a good lesson for us. We need Christians to stand up for the holiness of God and not compromise in the area of truth. You can't sacrifice truth for unity and the children of Israel recognized this and so should we and take a stand against the doctrines of demons that are being taught in the church today!

But look at the church today. We allow homosexuality in the church, even ordaining homosexual pastor's! We allow all kinds of sin into the church, not even thinking twice about it! And sin is like a cancer, it will destroy the body of believers in the end!

Let me share this with you and you will see how this is a threat to all of us, these false teachings or doctrines of demons!

We are told,

False teaching is a real threat to the church. False teaching is not a threat only in certain circumstances, or only in churches with certain governmental structures, or only in certain places and cultures in the world. We must recognize it as a threat because the Bible continually warns us that it is a threat.

Jesus warns us that false teachers will come from outside the community of believers, trying to hide their true intentions (Matt. 7:15-20). Peter tells us that false teachers can also arise from within the community of believers, bringing doctrine that is destructive and poisonous (2 Peter 2:1).

The Apostle Paul continually warned the churches that he served that if false teachers in their midst were left unchecked, the results would be disastrous (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Cor. 11:1-21; 1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Simply put, false teaching is not just a problem for other people and churches out there; it is a problem about which all believers must be vigilant and against which they must be on guard.

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One of the most common contributors to the spread of false teaching in the church is a general lack of Bible knowledge and discernment among the people. It might seem counterintuitive to say that students should be able to correct teachers when they bring falsehood into the church, but that is exactly what the Bible teaches us.

When Paul was in Berea, his teaching was not merely accepted on his own authority, but his listeners examined it daily by the Scriptures to see whether it was true (Acts 17:11). For this, they were praised by Luke as being “more noble.” All believers must read the Scriptures for themselves and compare what is being taught to the Scriptures. This does not require a radical skepticism, but it does mean that believers are not to unhesitatingly trust every word of mere men. They are to trust only the Scriptures in such a way.

A problem arises when believers do not have the willingness or the ability to search the Scriptures for themselves. This leads to a dependence on human authority and allows false teaching to take root and spread. The educational goal of the church should be not just to transmit knowledge of the Bible but also to transmit a love for the Bible and an eagerness to study it.

A second contributor to the spread of false teaching is institutional - the failure to hold people accountable for their false teaching. It has often been noted that there are three marks of the true church: the right preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments [Baptism and Communion], and the exercise of discipline.

The third mark exists to make sure the first two marks are maintained. When the church turns a blind eye to false teaching because its proponents are popular or have “successful ministries” (one thinks of more people or more money), or simply to avoid conflict in the church, it allows false teaching to spread and to be the source of further division and conflict. Church discipline exists to uphold the glory of Christ and His truth and also to protect the people of God from error and its consequences.

There is a third contributor to the advance of false teaching in the church, and it is related to leadership. Even when the people of God are eager to study His Word and the church is prepared to exercise discipline, false teaching can flourish when the leadership of the church is ill prepared and poorly trained. The lower we set our standards for training pastors and elders for the ministry, the less prepared they will be to recognize false teaching.

Pastors and elders who are untrained in historical theology will miss the reappearance of ancient false teaching in modern clothing. Those who have not been trained well in the Bible, its languages, and principles of its sound interpretation may fall prey to novel teachings that seem to explain away problems or contradictions. To combat false teaching, the church needs pastors, elders, and teachers who are both willing and able to confront falsehood (Titus 2:8; 1 Peter 2:15).

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What do we do with false teaching and false teachers?

This is really pretty simple and yet so many fight against this today. We are to ***REMOVE IT!***

Why in the world would you let false teachers and false teaching in your church? That would be like allowing just a little poison to be in your drink. It may not kill you right away but as you keep taking it in, you will die!

In II Peter 2:1-3 Peter warns us of the danger that they will bring into the church and into your life. He wrote, **“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”**

Don't follow their ways but look to the Lord according to His Word and you will not go wrong. Don't try to add to the Word of God, nor take away from the Word of God, but listen and obey what God is saying to you!

Now we may not think too much of these false teachers and their false teaching, but we should. Listen to what the Lord tells us in Jeremiah 23:16-17 on how He feels about them. We are told, **“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise Me, The Lord has said, “You shall have peace”; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, “No evil shall come upon you.””**

The Lord is warning us not to listen to them because they are not speaking for Him but for themselves, their own ideas, their own plans and it is ***WORTHLESS!***

What are we to do?

Listen to what Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:11, **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”**

We are to expose the false teachers and their false teaching, not make excuses or even embrace what they are saying!

And tragically, what we see today, is the false teachers and false teachings get placed in books for all to read. They are promoted in churches as good teachers, and they are not! Be wise people, don't allow these things into your life, it won't help you but, in the end, it will hurt you!

Look at the psychobabble we have allowed into the church and how it has destroyed relationships!

Do you really think that Sigmund Freud is going to be able to give us better counsel than the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you think our wonderful counselor is outdated by these men? Of course not, and yet, by our actions, that is what we are saying! Be warned, be wise, and listen to the Lord!

Paul in Romans 16:17-18 wrote, **“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”**

Did you notice what Paul wrote?

He said to avoid them, not to embrace them. And you can get mad at me for this, but I didn't say it. Paul did through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and this is truly a problem today. They embrace them, they fellowship with them like nothing is wrong and before long, the poison they are giving you will affect your life!



In Titus 3:9-11 Paul wrote again of what we are to do. He said, “**But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.**”

Don't get into disputes with them because they have already made up their mind and it doesn't matter how much Scripture you show them, they will not accept it. I have seen this over the last few years with false teaching, you can show them in the Scriptures, and it won't faze them at all. They have excuses why, for example, Paul is wrong, or we just don't know what he meant by it. It is very clear and yet, they won't let the Scriptures show them their error. Thus, avoid them, reject them because false teachers with their false teachings will cause division.

Why do they cause division?

Because they have to win you over to their side. We saw that a few years back with the Hebrew Roots movement that someone tried to bring in the church and how it was dividing the church until it was removed!

Be careful, be warned and stand up for the things of God!

It is as Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 5:21, “**Test all things; hold fast what is good.**”

Bring all teaching into the light of God's Word opened up to us by the Spirit of God and you won't go wrong! Hold fast to what is true, God's Word and get rid of what is false, what is not found in God's Word!

So we are to **REMOVE** false teachers and false teaching from our church and our lives!

But let me say this, we also must **EXAMINE IT!**

We need to make sure we have the correct information, or we can do wrong!

And what we see here with the children of Israel living on the west side of the Jordan River, in the Promise Land, is that they are going to find out what this altar is all about before they go to war.

So Phinehas, the high priest, and ten men from the ten tribes of Israel not involved in this compromise, came to meet these rebels on the east side of the Jordan River.

And Phinehas confronts them in Gilead, saying that your sin will not only affect you, but the whole nation of Israel. Like the sin of Peor, through the counsel of Balaam, it caused a curse to come upon the whole nation.

Balaam told Balak the king to send the pagan women into the camp of Israel, which will cause the children of Israel to lust after them and then to follow after their gods, for the worship of their gods were attached to sexual acts many times.

You see, Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel, but God told him not to, so he gave this counsel, which was just as destructive, for it made the children of Israel fall into sin.

Also, the sin of Achan, how it affected the whole nation when he took the spoils of war when God said those firstfruits of war belonged to Him.

You see, God looked upon them as a unit. Thus, if one sinned, the whole nation suffered for it. And Phinehas said that if dwelling on this side of the Jordan has caused you to sin, if this possession is not of God, then cross over with us so that you may not sin.

They should have never compromised and stayed on the east side of the Jordan River in the first place and here is an invitation to return to the land that God gave them.

Think about this for a minute. Just as with Israel, the body of Christ is looked upon as a unit. Yes, sin in the body of Christ does affect the unit you might say. It affects us individually, but it also affects the body of Christ, locally and globally!

Let me show you what I mean.

Do you remember when that pastor went on television after a gay man was murdered several years back, he had a sign that gave us his web site, “godhatesfags.com”

How sad and it was and it was a blemish on the entire body of Christ for people saw this as the way Christians feel. We don’t hate gay people, we hate the sin, we love the people!

Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 5:6, “**Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?**”

In other words, sin will grow; it will affect and infect the entire body if it is not dealt with, like cancer! It must be cut out!

Also, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 12:26-27, “**And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.**”

So if someone says something and you think they are way off on what they are saying, talk with them and find out and make sure that is what you really heard or that is what they really meant.

If they did wrong, if it is a false teaching, correct them in love. If what they said was not a false teaching, you just misunderstood them, then you have stopped a possible battle, a possible Civil War you might say!

Now what will transpire here? What will these brethren say regarding this compromise? Is this really a compromise? Will Civil War break out between them?

That is our next point, ***THE EXPLANATION!***

VERSES 21-29

What I like here is that the tribes from the Promise Land ask them what is going on and instead of getting upset, the tribes from the east side of the Jordan River let them know what this altar was all about.

And look at how they started this conversation out. They basically told them that if they did do anything wrong, then kill them.

We may put it like this, “If what I am doing, if what I am teaching is contrary to the Word of God, let me know. And, if I refuse to listen, then remove me!”

I guess I have never seen anyone who was into false teaching put it like that, but these tribes did!

And the reality is, they did nothing wrong.

Wait a minute, what about this altar?

Here’s the thing. This altar was not to be used for sacrifices, for burnt offerings but as a witness to future generations who may forget the ties they had with their brethren on the west side of the Jordan River and with the God they served!

This was not an act of rebellion but a witness that they were part of the family of God!

But if they were not living outside the Promise Land, they would not even have needed this altar in the first place!

Be careful where you are living!

And in the end, what we will see next, is ***THE HEALING AND CELEBRATION!***

VERSES 30-34

Look at what happened here as they heard that these tribes were not breaking the Law of God. The Civil War was halted, it did not go forward because there was nothing that they were doing that was wrong. It was not time for war but for a celebration!

You see, the reason the altar was built was explained and then accepted by Phinehas.

And it is just as the Psalmist said, **“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!”** Psalm 133:1.

Folk’s, that unity must be based in truth and we see that it is. For apart from truth, there can be no unity!

The lesson here is simple. You see, what had the potential of a Civil War with devastating effects, was first searched out for the truth of the matter before they jumped to the wrong conclusion.

May we learn that lesson before we jump in and either make fools of ourselves or cause devastating damage in the body of Christ. Search out the truth instead of looking just at the outward circumstances.

We also need to remember the enemy loves to divide us so that he can defeat us. Thus, we must be on guard against this in the church.

Paul said in Galatians 5:14-15, **“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”**

Here is a good point that we need to apply to our lives. We are not going to agree on every little point.

There are things that maybe God has spoken specifically to you, telling you that you are not to be involved in this. But maybe He has not spoken to someone else about this.

And I am not talking about doctrinal issues here or sin.

What I am talking about, for example is this. Maybe the Lord has spoken to you about secular music. He has to me. For me, I can't listen to it because it would draw me right back into it. I love the old rock and roll and that is the problem for me, maybe not for you!

You see, for you, maybe that is not the issue and you can listen to it and it does not bother you, it does not affect you like it would me.

Who is right and who is wrong?

We are both right because it is not a Biblical issue here, it is likes and dislikes or in this case, specifically what the Lord has shown me.

And I am not talking about vulgar or immoral words, but there is a lot of secular music that is benign.

But, if there is something that is a doctrinal issue, we must take a stand against it. We must not ignore it or sweep it under the carpet.

Today that is done far too often!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

It's a good time to be a false teacher and to espouse deadly doctrine. It seems that today's most brazen heretic will be granted a hearing and, in all likelihood, a book deal. Novelty is appealing, orthodoxy boring. It's the ones who sound the warning and issue the challenge that bear the risk - the risk of being labelled "haters." There's more patience for those who smilingly subvert the truth than for those who boldly defend it. Conviction is a sign of arrogance, while humility is expressed in uncertainty. Love, it seems, requires us to bear patiently with any amount of error. And this kind of love, we are told, is modeled after Jesus. Jesus did not judge, Jesus welcomed all opinions, Jesus would have accepted different kinds of teachings - so long as those teachings contained love and hints of truth.

A quick scan of the gospels, however, shows that this impression is a far cry from the Jesus of the Bible. It shows that society has reimagined Jesus through the relativism of our day. When Jesus interacted with people who were seeking, wandering, or misguided, he was invariably compassionate. He answered them with patience and gentleness. But when Jesus engaged with religious hypocrites and false teachers, he responded with righteous fury and bold conviction.

Today, those who love the truth must learn how to show such bold conviction through the old discipline of polemics - the practice of engaging in public debate and dispute. The purpose of polemics is not to score points or flex theological muscle, but to rebuke peddlers of error and to express concern for those caught up in their lies. Like the ancient heretics of Crete, today's false teachers "must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach" (Titus 1:11). As we do this well, we imitate Jesus Christ who was a skilled polemicist.

We see an example of Jesus' polemics in Matthew 23, where Jesus speaks to the crowd about the scribes and Pharisees. What unfolds in this scene is not private pleading but public censure. Jesus publicly addresses the deadly doctrine of these religious leaders for the benefit of their victims and potential victims. He holds nothing back. He does not make time to commend them for the things they do well. He does not temper his speech to give them the benefit of the doubt. Rather, he specifies their doctrinal error and unrighteousness actions, he labels them with strong but appropriate language, he warns of the consequences of their error, and he calls his listeners to reject the false teachers and their deadly doctrine. . . .

Jesus exposes the deadly doctrine and unrighteous actions of these false teachers. He appropriately describes those who espouse it, and he lays out the consequences of such error. However, polemics is not merely confronting error, but also teaching truth. And orthodoxy is not merely knowing the truth, but also submitting to it. For these reasons, Jesus appeals to his listeners to turn away from the absurdity and inconsistency of error toward God's truth. Contrary to the scribes and Pharisees who do all their deeds to be seen by others, Jesus tells the crowd: "The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12).

If Jesus's listeners will only apply reason and logic, they will see that this teaching cannot be true and that these actions do not promote righteousness. They will reject what is false and gladly accept what is true. They will put aside false doctrine and religious hypocrisy to instead embrace sound doctrine and godly living.



It's a good time to be a false teacher and to espouse deadly doctrine. And it will continue to be unless God's people embrace their responsibility to defend the faith and protect the vulnerable. Jesus has left us with both the mandate and the model. Jesus shows that while polemics gains few friends (after all, it was the ones he rebuked who put him to death and the ones he warned who deserted him), it honors God and saves listeners from falling into the snare of deadly doctrine.

- <http://bit.ly/2k60Yig>

It should not be a good time for a false teacher to spew their false doctrine or their doctrines of demons upon the world and the church, but it is.

Jude warned us as he wrote, **“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Jude 3-4.

Jude wanted to write about our salvation and the grace that God has extended to us. And how wonderful it is!

But the Holy Spirit redirected him to speak about the false teachers and the false teaching that has come into the church.

And instead of running wild not knowing what to do, Jude tells us that we are to **“contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”**

You see, it is not a new message we have. It is not new doctrine that has been spoken. It is the message that has been given to the apostles and the prophets and now to us that we must stand upon, contend for because it is a battle!

Let me give you a few points to think about as I begin to close this morning regarding these dangers of conflict in the church and even outside the church.

***Respond with a concern for God's holiness.***

***Respond with the courage to confront in love.***

***Respond with an attempt to reconcile before you fight.***

***Determine that you are willing to sacrifice to help them; don't confront unless you are willing to help.***

***Determine that you will see the situation from the perspective of the other person.***

***Determine that you will believe the best of one another.***

Yes, there are dangers in conflict, and thus, we must know how to handle conflict.

If it is regarding sin, false teaching, it must be dealt with in love and not ignored.

If there is a misunderstanding, talk about it, deal with it.

If it is likes and dislikes, don't fight over it, but grow through this by allowing God to show His grace and love in the situation!

Here in Joshua we see healing and a celebration as brethren were able to dwell together in unity! May that be our hearts desire as well!