

Dear Pathway Family,

I sit here surrounded by snow and freezing temperatures, hardly able to believe that by the time you read this, Spring will be just around the corner. We are soon to see green grass, blooming flowers, and new life springing up all around us. What a great time for a spiritual awakening, something that our country so desperately needs! We need a revival in our homes and our churches. We must restore God to His rightful place at the center of every aspect of our lives. The best way I know to accomplish this is to live by example. Honor God in all that you do, and don't be shy to share God's Word with every person that God puts in your path.

As you have read, Bible Pathway has committed to sending out an additional 5000 Bibles and devotionals each month this year, and we have faith and trust that God will provide the funds to reach this goal every month. ***And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*** (II Cor. 9:8). Please continue to be in prayer for this endeavor, and pray for God to bring a revival to this nation such as we have never seen or felt before.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

In His Love,
Jennifer

The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them (Deut. 1:6-8).

A second chance, a do-over, a re-take—whatever we call it, the opportunity to right a wrong or re-do a mistake is valuable and rare. The first generation of Israelites, the ones that the Lord had freed from slavery in Israel, had been given a tremendous gift from the Lord: ***Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers.*** Yet, ruled by fear, they had refused to accept it. ***But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we*** (Num. 13:31). As a result, they wandered the wilderness for an additional 38 years, and all except two of that original generation died. ***And the space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD swore unto them*** (Deut. 2:14). Now, though, the second generation was being presented with the same gift. This time, standing before God, they had the opportunity to renounce the cowardly choices of the past and say to their God, “We trust and obey.” ***Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths*** (Prov. 3:5-6).

The first generation had seen giants and balked. It was inconceivable to them that the God they followed was big enough to overcome such monsters. This generation had the same obstacles in front of them, yet they chose to believe Moses when he said, ***The LORD thy God, He will go over before thee, and***

He will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said (Deut. 31:3).

We live in a world today that is filled with ‘giants,’ ‘fierce warriors,’ and ‘walled cities.’ The enemies of God are everywhere, just as they were in the land of Canaan. It takes a remarkable amount of faith and courage to stand today and say, “I believe the Word of God, and I will follow Christ in all things,” but that is precisely what God calls us to do. Just as the Israelites stood on the boundaries of the promised land, we stand at the threshold of Heaven. The gift of eternal life is ours—no strings attached—as long as we are willing to place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ our Lord. Will you make the mistake of the first generation, or will you have the faith of the second? Is your God big enough?

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand (John 10:27-28).

Thought for the Day: *Don’t count the number of chances God has given you or the number of times you feel you have let Him down in the past; focus your attention instead on how best to follow Him now.*

Christ Portrayed: By Moses, who ***spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the Lord had given him in Commandment unto them*** (Deut. 1:3). Jesus faithfully told others everything God told Him to say. ***I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things*** (John 8:28).

Word Studies: 1:12 **bear** = endure; **cumbrance** = disputes; 1:27 **murmured** = complained, criticized; 1:39 **should be a prey** = would be taken captive; 1:42 **smitten** = defeated; 2:1 **compassed** = went around.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox, Bible Pathway Ministries President • **Government Officials:** Rep. Trent Kelly (MS), Rep. Warren Davidson (OH), Sen. Deb Fischer (NE) • **Country:** Sri Lanka (21,866,445) Southern Asia • Major Languages: Sinhala, Tamil, English • Christianity suppressed • 69.1% Buddhist (Official); 7.6% Muslim 7.1% Hindu; 6.2% Christian; 10% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek the Lord in times of trouble (Matt. 8:24-25).

Optional Reading: Luke 16

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes, and His commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever (Deut. 4:39-40).

Multiple verses in the Word of God stress the blessings that God's people will enjoy if they obey ***His statutes and His commandments***. From God's first interactions with Adam (Gen. 2:15-25) to Christ's final Words to His followers in the Revelation that He gave to John, the Lord has promised us His favor in return for our obedience. These verses, full of grace and hope, are some of the most uplifting verses in all of God's Word, but they are also some of the most frequently misunderstood and misapplied. The worldly-minded are quick to find in them the guarantee of material reward, yet it is only by reading them through the eyes of the Holy Spirit that we will come to understand the fullness of God's promise to His people (then and now).

The laws God gave to His people were carefully designed to keep them spiritually and physically healthy. They ensured that their relationships, both with each other and with strangers, would be just and merciful. God promised that if these laws were followed, the nation of Israel would receive His blessings and live forever in His presence. Under the New Covenant, this promise has been extended to include all who have been washed in the blood of Christ and reborn into the family of God. ***As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*** (John 14:9-11).

God's promise of eternal blessings for the nation of Israel (now the body of Christ) is not (and has never been) meant to be interpreted as a guarantee to His followers that they would

never experience hardships, endure sorrow, or know pain. Had this been His intent, there would have been no need for laws detailing the treatment of the poor, the widowed, or the orphaned (Ex. 22:21-24; Deut. 15:10-11; 27:19). Likewise, following in the footsteps of Christ brings with it the promise of spiritual riches and eternal life, not a guarantee of perfect health and a high paying job (Matt. 5:12; Luke 12:33-34; James 1:12). That does not mean, however, that we are bereft of God's blessings while we are here on earth. Had the nation of Israel kept its part of the Covenant, its people would have lived in a land ruled by godly love and fellowship that would have been able to carry them through any hardship. These same blessings are extended to all of God's Children today. Secure in the body of Christ, we do not have to face our trials alone. As the love of Christ flows freely amongst us, unmarred by greed or inflated opinions of self-worth, we, too, will experience the prosperity of God.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue (II Pet. 1:2-3).

Thought for the Day: *A blessed life is not one that has every desire fulfilled, but rather one that finds, with God, that it wants for nothing.*

Christ Portrayed: By Joshua, who led the Israelites into their inheritance (Deut. 3:28). Through Jesus we receive His promised ***inheritance among them which are sanctified*** (set apart) ***by faith that is in Me*** (Acts 26:18).

Word Studies: 3:5 **fenced** = fortified; 3:7 **spoil** = plunder; **prey** = prize of the war; 3:18 **meet** = fit; 3:28 **charge** = commission; 4:2 **diminish ought** = take away any- thing; 4:10 **fear** = have reverential heartfelt submission to; 4:13 **covenant** = binding agreement with qualifications given by God; 4:14 **possess** = live in.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Ami Bera (CA), Rep. Rosa DeLauro (CT) • **Country:** Sudan (35,482,233) North Eastern Africa • Major Languages: Arabic, English • Restricted Religious Freedom • Sunni Muslim; Small Christian Minority • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers to harvest for Him (Matt. 9:38).

Optional Reading: Luke 17

And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deut. 6:10-12).

The Lord had chosen Israel to be His special possession. ***Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel*** (Ex. 19:5-6). The bitter humiliation of Egyptian slavery, the miraculous release from Pharaoh, the long wanderings in the wilderness, and the marvelous victories over kings and countries were all designed to temper this fledgling nation. By allowing them to face obstacles, endure hardships, and witness His miracles, God opened the way for the Israelites to develop a deeper love and loyalty for their Sovereign Lord. If they had been willing to give themselves completely to Him, they would have emerged with an ironclad faith and would have happily lived in steadfast obedience to His Word.

This describes what God WANTED and PLANNED for His people. He had chosen Israel to stand as an example to the world, to display for all to see the blessings that God bestows on those who live faithful to the One True God. Yet, while God is perfect and infallible, His world is not. He knows that human beings are vulnerable to a wide range of temptations that can lead them away from His perfect plan. Through Moses, he warned them of the dangers that prosperity could bring once they inherited the Promised Land. As Israel enjoyed the blessings of freedom and wealth, they would be tempted to gratify their worldly desires, ignoring God in the process.

These dangers are just as real for those of us in the world today. Prosperity is deceptive. The more we have, the more we forget our dependence upon God and, in pride, assume ourselves to be self-sufficient. Faith in God gives way to conceit in our own accomplishments. We lose our humility and grow arrogant, reveling in our power and good fortune. To prevent this from happening to us and to keep our egos in check, we need to heed the advice that Moses gave to the Israelites: ***Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name*** (Deut. 6:13).

No matter whether we live in prosperity or poverty, if we keep the words of Moses in the forefront of our minds, we will not stray far from the will of God. ***Fear*** (revere) ***the LORD thy God***. Remember Him in all things as your Creator and your Savior. ***Serve Him***. Follow His prompts in your daily life. Don't consider any day a successful day unless a good part of it has been spent actively participating in the furthering of God's kingdom. ***Swear by His name***. Whatever you do, do it in the name and for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (Col. 3:12).

Thought for the Day: *Earthly fortune can raise us above the daily concern for home and sustenance, but only God can raise us into heaven.*

Christ Revealed: Through the land flowing with milk and honey (Deut. 6:3). This pictures Christ who bountifully provides for our needs. ***Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*** (Matt. 6:33).

Word Studies: 5:1 **judgments** = laws; 5:2 **covenant** = binding agreement with qualifications given by God; 6:21 **bondmen** = slaves; 6:22 **sore** = terrible; 7:6 **above** = out of; 7:13 **fruit** = children; **fruit** = crops.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. David Schweikert (AZ), Rep. Jill Tokuda (HI), Rep. Tom Emmer (MN), (Rep.) Bryan Stei (WI), Rep. Mike Gallagher (WI) • **Country:** Suriname (573,311) Northeastern South America • Major Languages: Dutch, English • Religious Freedom • 27.4% Hindu; 25.2% Protestant; 22.8% Roman Catholic; 19.6% Muslim; 5% Indigenous Beliefs • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for the Lord to give you the right words to share Christ with others (Matt. 10:18-20).

Optional Reading: Luke 18

And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live (Deut. 8:3).

When the Lord first provided **manna** for the Israelites, they were amazed. They had never seen anything like it before! This **manna** truly became the “bread of life” for the weary travelers, sustaining them throughout the 40 long years they traversed the wilderness. Unlike more traditional food sources, the nature of the **manna** made it clear that God was in charge and that He and He alone was responsible for their survival. At the behest of God, it appeared six days a week and was to be gathered fresh each day; only on the day before the Sabbath could it be saved overnight without spoiling (Ex. 16:4-27). It was impossible to store for future use. God provided only what each family needed, no more and no less. There was nothing the individual Israelite could do to increase his share; there wasn’t even a way to ensure they would receive the next day’s allotment. All they could do was trust in the promise of God.

In this manner, God fed their souls alongside their bodies. The manna was given daily, but the only guarantee they had that it would appear the next day was the Word of God. The Israelites had two choices. They could worry and struggle in a futile effort to control the uncontrollable, or they could, through faith, confidently place their lives in God’s hands. From our readings, we know that the Israelites continuously struggled with this concept of surrendering to God. Throughout their 40-year journey, many died, not from lack of food, but from lack of faith.

The concept of simple, unconditional faith is no easier for us to grasp today than it was for the Israelites during their sojourn through the wilderness, but it is just as necessary for our day-to-day lives. ***Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*** (Heb. 11:1). We live under the same promise as the Israelites. Trust in God, follow Him, live by

His Word, and our needs will be met. ***He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger.*** Just as the Israelites suffered, we, too, will face times of uncertainty. We may be hungry, scared, needy, tired, or sick. In many of these situations, we will also be powerless, just like the Israelites in the wilderness. Yet God has promised us that our needs will be met as long as we trust in Him. ***Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things*** (Matt. 6: 31-32). In His time, in His way, in His will, by His Word, He will provide.

When faced with adversity, we should rejoice rather than complain! ***And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*** (II Cor. 12:9). Every setback we face allows us the unique opportunity to see our God in action.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all (Ps. 34:19).

Thought for the Day: *It is important to remember that when living by God, it is no longer the world that determines our needs, but Him.*

Christ Revealed: Through the shittim (acacia wood) used to make the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 10:3). Acacia wood, a desert growth, is symbolic of Christ in His human form. ***When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law*** (Gal. 4:4).

Word Studies: 8:2 **prove** = test; 8:12 **full** = satisfied; 8:14 **thine heart be lifted** = you become proud; 8:18 **establish His covenant** = confirm His agreement with His qualifications; 9:1 **fenced** = walled.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Christopher Smith (NJ), Sen. James Lankford (OK), Sen Tina Smith (MN) • **Country:** Swaziland (1,419,623) Southern Africa • Major Languages: English, siSwati • Religious Freedom • 40% Zionist; 20% Roman Catholic; 10% Muslim; 30% Other (Anglican, Bahai, Methodist, Mormon, Jewish) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Unite with others in prayer; God will bring your request to pass (Matt. 18:19-20).

Optional Reading: Luke 19

And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, His greatness, His mighty hand, and His stretched out arm (Deut. 11:2). But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the LORD which He did. Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it; And that ye may prolong your days in the land, which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey (Deut. 11:7-9).

From our very first introduction to Scripture, we have been taught that it exists to lead us to Christ and, through Him, to life everlasting. We are rightly eager to share it with those who are weighed down by the problems of the world and searching for direction. We teach it to our children in an attempt to lay the foundation for their salvation, and we passionately argue it with those who deny its relevance. We proudly proclaim how it changed our lives and brought us into the body of Christ. The problem, though, is that for many, this is where their relationship with Scripture ends. They've 'found' God, so they cease to look for Him. They believe that since they have been redeemed and are guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit, they have arrived at their destination, and further education and planning are unnecessary.

Such was likely the case with the generation of Israelites to whom Moses spoke in today's reading. As children, they had witnessed God's deliverance of their people from Egyptian slavery. They had grown to adulthood on a wilderness journey punctuated by miracles and sustained by manna from heaven. They were soon to take possession of the land promised to their forefathers, ***a land that floweth with milk and honey***. These were people who felt they 'knew' God. They had arrived at their destination; their responsibility, they now believed, was to ensure that the next generation would be ready to inherit when their time came.

Moses made it clear to his audience that they still had much to learn. It was precisely because they knew God that their re-

sponsibilities to Him had increased. Taking possession of the promised land was not the endpoint of their journey; it was a new beginning. If they were to continue to grow and thrive in this new land, they would need to fully immerse themselves in God's Word. Only by internalizing it and applying it daily to their own lives would they be able to teach it to the next generation.

Apart from Himself (all of Himself—Father, Son, and Spirit), the greatest gift God has ever given us is His living Word. ***For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*** (Heb. 4:12). Every verse, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, contains messages personalized for every person ever born at every stage of their relationship with God.

While it is vital that we continue to educate the next generation and share the Word with those in need, it is equally important that we do not neglect our own studies. He is speaking; we need to listen.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Ps. 119:105).

Thought for the Day: *When we are reborn into the body of Christ, it is the beginning of the journey, not the end.*

Christ Revealed: Through the burnt offerings which were totally consumed. These typified Christ's total offering of Himself to death (Deut. 12:6; see Heb. 10:5-7). ***The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the Sanctuary*** (Holy Place) ***by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify*** (make holy) ***the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate*** (Heb. 13:11-12).

Word Studies: 11:1 **keep His charge** = be true to all His requirements; 11:6 **opened her mouth** = split like a chasm; 11:10 **thy foot** = working a treadmill with your foot; 11:11 **drinketh water** = soaks up water.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Greg Murphy (NC) • **Country:** Sweden (9,723,809) Northern Europe • **Major Language:** Swedish • **Limited Religious Freedom** • 87% Lutheran; 13% Other (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember, what is impossible with men is possible with God (Matt. 19:26).

Optional Reading: Luke 20

Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always (Deut. 14:22-23).

The subject of tithes can be a touchy one in today's society. As a general rule, we look upon the money we make as a personal, private possession. Consequently, the concept of a mandatory tithe is an uncomfortable subject among many Christians. Many reject it outright. Others view it as a duty, a tax levied by God. Just as we do with our government tax forms each spring, we double- and triple-check for every conceivable deduction that could possibly lower their bill to God. Yet God never intended the act of tithing to be about the money, and we are doing ourselves a grave disservice by reducing it to that level. To God, tithing was done in recognition and celebration of His blessings, and the tithes themselves were used to bring His people together in love and fellowship, thus furthering His kingdom on earth.

And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. The tithes of the produce from the ground and the herds were brought in recognition of God as the source of all life's mercies and blessings. God claimed the tithes not because He needed the possessions but as an essential part of worship and praise. When tithing, His people gained far more than they lost. They brought their 10% and gathered together with others who were similarly honoring the Lord, and in God's name, they created a feast from the offerings of all. A mere 10% became a bountiful blessing when added to everyone else's. ***Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses***

shall burst out with new wine (Prov. 3:9-10).

Together with God, we can do wonderful things. Christ rules in love as Lord of His people, and He appeals to all willing hearts to express His love on all levels—spiritually, physically, and financially. ***For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*** (Luke 12:34). The self-centered, self-pleasing person who lives only to get, to have, to hold, and to keep will discover too late that life has become less satisfying with the passing of every year. He will come to the end of his life miserly and obsessed with his accumulated wealth, convinced that everyone, from the government to Christian charities, is trying to take it from him. In contrast, those who freely and happily offer their tithes and gifts by joining with others and combining their time, talents, and resources to further the kingdom of God will lead rich and satisfying lives, regardless of material possessions.

Over the coming year, let us resolve to remember God's place in our lives. God stated: ***I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*** (Rev. 22:13). Everything we have already belongs to Him (1 Cor. 10:26). With joyful hearts, let us choose to come together and put our tithes to work for the glory of God!

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18).

Thought for the Day: *A generous soul will never find themselves tethered to the world.*

Christ Revealed: Through the year of release, which typifies Christ's forgiveness of our sins (Deut. 15:1). This should cause us to realize how important it is to forgive others, even as He has forgiven us (Matthew 6:14-15). ***Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*** (Eph. 4:32).

Word Studies: 14:1 **cut** = disfigure; **make any baldness** = shave; 14:2 **holy . . . peculiar people** = treasured possession, dedicated; 14:7 **cloven** = split; 14:8 **swine** = pig; 14:23 **fear** = give reverential, heartfelt submission to; 14:25 **turn** = exchange; 14:26 **bestow** = spend for whatever you desire.

Pray For Country: Switzerland (8,061,516) Central Europe • Major Languages: German, French, Italian • Religious Freedom • 38.2% Roman Catholic; 26.9% Protestant; 4.9% Muslim; 5.7% Other Christian; 1.6% Other; 21.4% None; 1.3% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray with great faith and the Lord will answer (Matt. 21:22).

Optional Reading: Luke 21

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother (Deut. 17:14-15).

Moses knew the people that he led very, very well. He knew their many weaknesses and their tendency to yield to peer pressure. Although God had established a comfortable hierarchy of leadership through the priests, Levites, and judges (established under the authority of Moses) (Ex. 18:24-26), and although God Himself occupied the position of Leader and final authority in all things, Moses knew that the people would not be satisfied for long. They would look at the nations surrounding them, realize they were different, and begin clamoring for a king. It was not the path He wanted for them, but he was aware that it was one they would eventually choose.

Through His servant Moses, God outlined His requirements for such an eventuality, detailing both the selection and the manner in which the king would be expected to conduct himself once crowned. For a man to be crowned king, he would have to be an Israelite of God's choosing; no one else would do (Deut. 17:15). Once placed on the throne, he would be dependent on God for power and expected to draw His might from the Lord. He would be forbidden to amass large stables of horses or outfit a standing cavalry, and neither he nor the people he led would be allowed to return to Egypt for aid or trade (17:16). God intended for Israel to stand as a testament to the power of God, not to the power of her king.

Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold (17:17). To remain in God's favor, the king would be expected to abstain from marrying multiple wives. It was common practice for kings of that era to take wives from the daughters of rulers of surrounding kingdoms. Through these

marriages, they would form powerful political alliances. God wanted to ensure that Israel's king stayed true to his covenant relationship with God. That sacred partnership would suffer if he divided his loyalties between multiple allies. For much the same reason, the king would not be allowed to build up and capitalize on his own wealth (17:17). Just as the Israelites in the wilderness had relied on God for their daily bread, so too would the king be required to trust in the Lord to meet his needs.

The final and most important of the commands indicated that the appointed king would need to understand all the laws of God. ***And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them*** (17:18-19). Only by following these statutes would the king and the kingdom entrusted to him by God thrive.

The LORD hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all (Ps. 103:19).

Thought for the Day: *God expects us to better ourselves in His service, but His expectations have never been for perfection; faith is found in braving the challenge, not succeeding in it.*

Christ Revealed: Through the Old Testament animal (without blemish) from which sacrifices were made (Deut. 17:1). Christ was perfectly pure from all sin. ***Christ . . . without blemish and without spot*** (1 Pet. 1:19).

Word Studies: 17:2 **transgressing His covenant** = sinful conduct; 17:4 **wrought** = done; 17:12 **presumptuously** = arrogantly, haughtily; **hearken unto** = listen to and obey; 17:15 **stranger** = foreigner; 18:3 **due** = right; 18:6 **sojourned** = has been residing; 18:8 **like** = equal; **patrimony** = father's estate.

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Official:** Rep. Juan Vargas (CA) • **Country:** Syria (17,951,639) Middle East • Major Language: Arabic • No Religious Freedom - Islamic State • 87% Muslim; 10% Christian (Orthodox, Uniate, Nestorian); 3% Other (Druze, Jewish) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Continually watch and pray so that you won't yield to temptation in a moment of weakness (Matt. 26:41).

Optional Reading: Luke 22

When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth (Deut. 23:21-23).

Honesty. Integrity. Personal accountability. These are increasingly rare commodities in today's world, a world in which emotions are allowed to rule the tongue, and promises are made to be broken. Every contract comes with an escape clause, and every agreement contains a caveat. Craftiness and verbal manipulation are considered 'the norm' for interpersonal relations, and we look down on those who are fooled by others, calling them naive and ill-equipped for life.

We teach our children from infancy that nothing is absolute — everything they say or that others say to them is provisional and can be taken back with the simple phrase, "I've changed my mind." Instead of guarding our own tongues and teaching our children to do the same, we assure them that impulsive promises (positive or negative) are never binding and that they will always have the opportunity to recant after they have had time to think it over.

A quick survey of God's Word makes it clear that He does not share in this popular worldview. To God, a promise (vow) is sacrosanct and must be fulfilled by the person making it. ***If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth*** (Num. 30:2). Most Christians understand that this applies to any promise we make directly to God, but many are surprised to discover that it applies equally to promises we make to others, as well. ***Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another*** (Eph. 4:25).

A promise is a verbal contract; the words 'I promise' imply an oath to fulfill the words that came before it. To renege on that

at any time, for any reason, puts lie to your word and causes you to sin. Rash, unfulfillable promises represent sin in and of themselves because they are lies the moment they are uttered. Foolish but fulfillable promises put the promisor in the uncomfortable position of either following through (and at times sinning in the process) or reneging (and thereby sinning). God's advice on how to handle this is simple—don't put yourself in the situation in the first place because, once you are there, it's too late to 'fix.' Guard your thoughts and your tongue. Understand clearly that your word IS your bond, and speak no vow or promise that has not been laid on your heart by Him to speak.

In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise (Prov. 10:19). When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands (Eph. 5:4-6)?

Thought for the Day: *Words and actions go hand in hand in the eyes of God.*

Christ Revealed: Christ died on a cross in our place, submitting to the penalty of death imposed by the Law for our sins (Deut. 21:23). In the evening He was taken down from the cross, signifying the Law had been satisfied (John 19:31). ***Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13).***

Word Studies: 21:3 **wrought** = worked; 21:4 eared = ploughed; 21:5 stroke = as- sault; 21:12 **pare** = trim; 21:13 **bewail** = mourn; 21:15 **hated** = unloved; 22:3 hide **thyself** = avoid responsibility; 22:6 **dam** = mother; 22:8 **battlement** = guard rail; 22:9 **divers** = various kinds of; 22:14 **maid** = virgin.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Official:** Rep.Greg Stanton (AZ), Rep. Jahana Hayes (WI), Rep Josh Gottheimer (NJ) • **Country:** Taiwan (23,359,928) Eastern Asia • Major Language: Mandarin Chinese • Religious Freedom • 93% "Chinese Religions" (Buddhist/Taolist/Confucian); 4.5% Christianity; 2.5% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray in faith, and the Lord will answer (Mark 11:24).

Optional Reading: Luke 23

When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing (Deut. 24:19-22).

Just 40 years prior, the nation of Israel had been more conceptual than factual. God's people had lived as **a bondman in the land of Egypt**. They had been slaves occupying the lowest levels of society and driven hard at the hands of their masters, each day a painful struggle for survival. As they stood on the cusp of a new life, the Lord urged them never to forget the humble beginnings from which He had brought them. **But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing** (Deut. 24:18). The land they were entering into was rich and fertile, but He cautioned them against allowing themselves to become so accustomed to comfort that they forgot what it meant to be poor and in need.

In an agrarian society, those without land or those who lacked the resources or manpower to sow and tend to crops, such as the **stranger**, the **fatherless**, and the **widow**, were at a distinct disadvantage. The provisions set out by the Lord were simple and straightforward, designed in such a way as to provide both sustenance and dignity to those in need. The Lord's command to His people not to strip their fields, trees, and vines clean at every harvest placed very little hardship on the landowners. Although it may have cut somewhat into their final profit margin, the bulk of their harvest was always safely processed for their own use. For those to whom they opened their lands for gleaning afterward, however, it offered a unique

opportunity to work to meet their own needs, and it very well might have made the difference between life and death.

Although most of us no longer draw our resources directly from the land on which we live, the needy are still with us, and we still have ‘fields’ of resources from which we are called to compassionately and creatively share. God desires us to do more than simply donate and walk away. How much richer might all of our lives be if we took the time to actively engage those less fortunate than ourselves? How many futures might be brightened if we found a way to work together with them to meet their needs in a long-term, ultimately self-sustainable way? And what might we ourselves gain if we opened our hearts wide and allowed Christ’s love for our fellow man to shine through without reluctance or hesitation?

But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:17-18).

Thought for the Day: *Ask yourself whom you truly work for: yourself, the world, or God.*

Christ Revealed: Through the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and Pharaoh (Deut. 26:8). ***Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world*** (Gal. 1:3-4).

Word Studies: 24:3 **hate** = dislike; 24:4 **abomination** = detestable; 24:10 **pledge** = a loan, security; 24:12 **not sleep with his pledge** = not keep it overnight; 24:15 **hire** = wages; 24:18 **bondman** = slave; 25:1 **controversy** = dispute; **unto judgment** = to court; 25:4 **treadeth** = crushes.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Russ Fulcher (ID), Rep. Jodey Arrington (TX) • **Country:** Tajikistan (8,051,512) Central Asia • Major Languages: Tajik, Russian • Restricted Religious Freedom • 90% Muslim; 10% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Rejoice that our Savior was born (Luke 2:11).

Optional Reading: Luke 24

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out (Deut. 28:15-19).

The message of Deuteronomy 28 can be summed up neatly in one sentence: Choices have consequences. God imbued us with free will—the power to choose the path we walk—but He made it clear from the beginning that not all paths were desirable. There is one and only one path that leads to righteousness and one overarching choice that places us on that path. We must choose to put our faith in God, look to Him as our guide, and take His Word as our map. It is from this choice alone that all God's blessings spring. For the Israelites, this meant they had to fully uphold and obey all the commandments, laws, and statutes He had given them with a faithful heart. Verses 1 – 14 of Deuteronomy 28 explain in detail the blessed consequences of making that choice.

In marked contrast to the single path leading to righteousness, there are an uncountable number of paths that lead to death and destruction. Yet despite their number, all of the paths have the first step in common: a choice is made to forgo the guidance of God. This foundational choice is free to make, but its cursed consequences come with a terrible price. Living without God means forfeiting all truth and light and replacing it with a pale worldly imitation. Worst of all, living without God means dying without God. ***He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*** (1 John 5:12). Verses 15 – 68 of Deuteronomy 28 lay out what the Israelites could expect if they turned their backs to God and shunned His commandments, laws, and statutes.

There are many who hold up Deuteronomy 28 as proof of

what they term God's despotic, cruel nature. They focus on the horrors described in its latter verses and ignore everything else, asking how any decent person could worship a God who would purposefully inflict such atrocities on His creation. While they are right in believing that Deuteronomy 28 showcases the true nature of God, they are wrong in their interpretation of that nature. In the ultimate act of fairness and transparency, God ensured that the Israelites were given all the information they needed to make an informed choice. God wasn't threatening His people; He was giving them advanced knowledge of what consequences they would face (good and bad) in relation to their choices. When Deuteronomy 28 is read as a whole, God's justice and mercy take center stage. By explaining the consequences of each choice in detail, He did everything possible (short of revoking their free will) to show them the way.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

Thought for the Day: *Some misinterpret free will as God's will flowing through whatever choice we make; this belief represents a fundamental failure of the test God has set before us.*

Christ Portrayed: As the One from whom our blessings come (Deut. 28:1-2). ***Blessed be . . . God . . . who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings . . . in Christ*** (Eph. 1:3).

Word Studies: 28:4 **fruit of thy body** = children; fruit of thy ground = produce; **fruit of thy cattle** = offspring; 28:7 **smitten** = struck, defeated; 28:11 **plenteous** = abundant; 28:13 **observe** = obey; 28:14 **go aside** = turn aside, deviate.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Country:** Tanzania (49,639,138) Eastern Africa • Major Languages: Swahili, English, Arabic • Restricted Religious Freedom; • 35% Muslim; 35% Indigenous Beliefs; 30% Christian • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for (not against) your enemies (Luke 6:28).

Optional Reading: John 1

And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as He rejoiced over thy fathers: If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul (Deut. 30:9-10).

The Israelites stood at the threshold of a glorious future. The message Moses had imparted made clear that the Lord's blessings were theirs for the asking. The Lord was willing to recreate paradise in exchange for their heartfelt obedience. Still, Moses' words were disconcerting. The curses that would come from disobedience were horrible, and there was a general concern amongst the people that they might somehow transgress against God by breaking laws and statutes that had not yet been revealed to them.

Patiently, Moses addressed their concerns: ***It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it. Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it*** (Deut. 30:12-14). They had no reason to fear. God had told them all that they needed to know for them to be able to live within His will. God did not expect His people to read His mind, only to live within the guidelines of what had been revealed.

The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law (29:29). At the time this verse was written, God's people knew a great deal less of ***the secret things*** than we do now. They had seen miracles both wonderful and terrible, but the full scope of God's plan was still hidden from them. Today, Jesus the Messiah has been revealed to us, the barrier has been removed, and

we, as members of the body of Christ, have been imbued with the Holy Spirit. Consequently, God's expectations of us have evolved, taking into account our new level of understanding.

God has fully revealed Himself to us through His Spirit (1 Cor. 2:7-12), but that does not mean we know everything He knows. God is omniscient and omnipotent; nothing is hidden from His view. He is responsible for every living thing in the universe. Even if He told us every thought He ever had, there is no way we could comprehend them. God shares what we need to know when we need to know it to live a godly life. The rest we must just accept on faith.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Cor. 13:9-12).

Thought for the Day: *Having faith in God does not mean that we have an automatic understanding of His plans.*

Christ Revealed: As **life** (Deut. 30:15). Jesus is **the Resurrection, and the Life** (John 11:25).

Word Studies: 29:4 **perceive** = know; 29:17 **abominations** = detestable things; 29:20 **smoke** = ablaze; 29:29 **secret** = hidden; 30:1 **call them to mind** = remember them; 30:3 **turn thy captivity** = restore you from captivity; 30:4 **unto the outmost parts** = to the ends of earth.

Pray For Government Official: Rep. Nikki Budzinski (IL) • **Country:** Thailand (67,741,401) Southeast Asia • **Major Languages:** Thai, English • **Religious Freedom;** Buddhism is the state religion • 93.6% Buddhist; 4.9% Muslim; 1.2% Christian; 0.2% Other; 0.1% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Seek the Lord's teaching; grow and mature in your prayer life (Luke 11:1).

Optional Reading: John 2

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also His heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places (Deut. 33:26-29).

As Moses watched the Israelites stand poised to take that first step, the joy in his heart overflowed. How wonderful it was to be the chosen of God! ***Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD.*** How blessed were the children of Israel, whom God had chosen from out of all the nations on earth to be His special possession (Deut. 7:6; I Pet. 2:9). The Israelites had done nothing to earn this designation; it was theirs by grace alone, a manifestation of God's promise to Abraham.

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). These are the promises God gave Abraham and made manifest in the nation of Israel. These promises have been fully funded through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord and will come to final fruition in the last days. It is in these promises that our salvation was born, and it is because of these promises that we too can now proclaim with certainty: ***Happy art we: who is like unto us, O people saved by the LORD.*** There is no greater joy than that which comes from being enfolded into the family of God.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto Him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be His God, and He shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:3-8).

Thought for the Day: *There is no path available to us to earn God's love. What we must faithfully come to understand is that we have always had it.*

Christ Revealed: As **our Rock** (Deut. 32:31). Christ was **that spiritual Rock** (Petra) **that followed** (accompanied) **them** (I Cor. 10:4).

Word Studies: 32:3 **publish** = proclaim; 32:19 **abhorred** = despised; 32:20 **froward** = disloyal; 32:41 **whet** = sharpen; 32:44 **Hoshe'a** = Joshua; 33:9 **covenant** = **agreement**; 33:15 **lasting** = everlasting; 33:28 **corn** = grain; 33:29 **tread upon their high places** = trample down their heathen altars; 34:2 **utmost sea** = Mediterranean; 34:6 **sepulchre** = grave; 34:7 **abated** = lessened; 34:12 **great terror** = marvelous deeds.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Sen. Mitt Romney (UT), Sen. Tammy Duckworth (IL), Rep. Joyce Beatty (OH), Rep. Ritchie Torres (NY) • **Country:** Timor-Leste (1,201,542) Southeastern Asia • Major Languages: Tetum, Portuguese • Religious Freedom • 96.9% Roman Catholic; 2.2% Protestant/Evangelical; 0.3% Muslim; 0.6% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask for your daily needs (Luke 11:3).

Optional Reading: John 3

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel (Josh. 1:1-2).

The Book of Joshua picks up immediately where the Book of Deuteronomy ends. Moses is dead, buried by the Lord in a secluded grave (Deut. 34:5-6). Joshua, who had long stood faithfully by Moses' side, is now charged with the responsibility of leading God's people into the land of Canaan. Although God and Moses had been preparing Joshua for this 'promotion,' it is likely that he still felt overwhelmed and insecure when the moment arrived. After all, the only time that he had ever attempted to lead the Israelites, they had responded by wanting to stone him! ***And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land (Num. 14:6-7). But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel (14:10).*** He must have wondered if it were possible for him to lead these volatile people. Did he have the strength and the skill necessary, or would he once again fail to get the people to understand the will of God?

Without even giving Joshua time to voice his concerns, God addressed them in such a manner that left no room for doubt. ***Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest (Josh. 1:9).*** God made it clear that He had called Joshua, and that He was providing him with the necessary tools for success. ***This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou***

shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (1:8). The ***book of the law*** that God had just given the people through His servant Moses was now to serve as a permanent guidebook for Joshua. The Lord promised him that as long as he faithfully followed the Word, he ***shalt have good success***.

As we dedicate ourselves to the service to God, we may sometimes face challenging tasks that we doubt our ability to handle. The initial, fear-provoked response to such a challenge is usually to look backward at our past failures and drag them forward as examples of why it would be a mistake for us to try again. The thing is, God doesn't care about our past failures. He is calling us NOW. If we find the courage to answer Him, He will give us all the necessary tools for the task at hand. ***For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*** (Phil. 2:13). We cannot effectively serve the Lord if we are looking to the past; only by arming ourselves with His Word and steadily moving forward will we achieve success.

Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established (Prov. 16:3).

Thought for the Day: *Guilt and insecurity in the service of God expose a lack of confidence in ourselves and, by association, a lack of faith in God.*

Christ Revealed: Through the ***scarlet line in the window*** that saved Rahab and her household – symbolic of the blood of Christ (Josh. 2:21; Heb. 11:31; James 2:25). ***The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin*** (1 John 1:7).

Word Studies: 1:1 **minister** = assistant; 1:4 **coast** = territory, boundary; 1:15 **rest** = peace; **sunrising** = east; 1:17 **hearkened unto** = obeyed; 2:17 **blameless** = free; **swear** = promise under oath; 2:19 **on our head** = our responsibility; 2:20 **quit** = free; 3:16 **Salt Sea** = Dead Sea; **against** = opposite.

Pray For Bible Pathway Printer: Pollock Printing, Nashville, TN • **Government Officials:** Sen. John Hoeven (ND), Rep. Mike Carey (OH) • **Country:** Togo (7,351,374) Western Africa • **Major Languages:** French, Several African Languages • **Religious Freedom** • 29% Christian; 20% Muslim; 51% Indigenous Beliefs • **Prayer Suggestion:** Realize that your life is in God's hands and ask Him to deliver you from all evil (Luke 11:4).

Optional Reading: John 4

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that He lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand: and Joshua went unto Him, and said unto Him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, Nay; but as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, What saith my LORD unto His servant? And the Captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so (Josh. 5:13-15).

Joshua was on high alert. He had assumed leadership of the Israelites following the death of Moses, his mentor and friend. Soon afterward, he had triumphantly led his people across the Jordan River on dry land, her waters miraculously held back by the hand of God. The news of their God and His miracles had come before them, and their enemies had trembled with fear. Despite their tactical advantage, God had instructed them to make camp and restore themselves to righteousness under the terms of the Covenant that He had established with Abraham rather than attack. Now, after renewing their faith, the time for battle was approaching, and Joshua was contemplating his strategy. He would have to lead an army of foot soldiers against the well-fortified, high-walled cities protected by a chariot-led cavalry. As he considered his options, ***behold, there stood a Man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand.***

Joshua's immediate reaction was to ask, ***Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?*** He may have been concerned that there was yet another foe he hadn't considered, or perhaps he might have hoped that the Lord had sent them an ally. As the man revealed himself, though, Joshua's trepidation faded away, and ***he fell on his face to the earth, and did worship.*** The ***Captain of the Host*** that stood before him had not come to help or harm, but rather to lead. The pre-incarnate Christ, God Himself, had come to remind Joshua of who was truly shouldering the weight of the battle. The dilemma facing Joshua wasn't one of battle strategy; it was one of trust. ***And the Captain of***

the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. As the Captain revealed Himself, Joshua had an instant to choose. Would he ask for help on his terms, or would he open himself to heavenly guidance?

When faced with formidable problems, it is human nature to attempt to take charge and find a solution. As Christians, we pride ourselves on asking for God's help in these situations. All too often, though, we ask for 'help' by telling Him exactly what we need, then sitting back and waiting for Him to deliver. We want His support so badly that we cannot see that what we really need is His guidance! We could eliminate a great deal of our day-to-day stress if we would only remember one simple truth: It is His place to lead; it is our place to follow by faith.

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

Thought for the Day: *God guides us in the direction of His choosing, not the direction we would have Him take us.*

Christ Portrayed: As the ***Captain of the host of the LORD*** (Josh. 5:14). Christ is the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10).

Word Studies: 4:6 **sign** = memorial monument; 4:10 **hasted** = hurried; 4:11 **clean passed** = finished crossing; 4:14 **magnified** = exalted; 4:20 **pitch** = set up; 5:1 **their heart melted** = they lost their courage; 5:8 **whole** = healed; 5:11 **old corn** = produce from previous harvest; **unleavened** = yeast-free; **parched** = roasted; 6:1 **straitly shut up** = carefully barricaded.

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Officials:** Gov. Mark Gordon (WY), Rep. Dan Crenshaw (TX) • **Country:** Tokelau (1,337) South Pacific Ocean • **Major Languages:** Tokelauan, English, Samoan • **Religious Freedom** • 58.2% Congregational Christian Church; 36.6% Roman Catholic; 1.8% Presbyterian; 2.8% Other Christian; 0.1% Spiritualism and New Age; 0.5% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray persistently; you will receive an answer (Luke 11:9-10).

Optional Reading: John 5

And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few. So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water (Josh 7:2-5).

Flush from the success at Jericho, the Israelites were eager to press further into the land. After his scouts reported that they had found an easy target in the city of Ai, Joshua sent a few thousand men to capture the city. What happened next left them in shock. ***And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.*** They had failed, and Joshua was dumbfounded. He couldn't understand how such a thing could have happened. Yet a quick look back through God's Word reveals EXACTLY what went wrong.

Nine times in the first six chapters of the Book of Joshua, we find that the Lord has spoken to and directed Joshua (1:1; 3:7; 4:1,8,10,15; 5:2,15; 6:2). The Lord had orchestrated everything, from the crossing of the Jordan River to the fall of Jericho. Whether great or small, Joshua had taken no action without the input of God, right up to the point where he decided to capture the city of Ai. That decision Joshua chose to make on his own, and it resulted in the death of 36 of his men.

Scripture does not tell us why Joshua acted impulsively; it only describes the decision that was made and the consequences that followed. This was a rare but costly lapse in judgment for Joshua, but it is an all-too-common mistake for modern-day

Christians. Most of us are diligent about going to God when faced with large and difficult decisions, but we often forget that He is equally invested in the ‘less important’ day-to-day aspects of our lives. When handling the ‘small stuff,’ we often bypass God and instead rely on our own good judgment, which can lead to all sorts of trouble.

Without the clear-cut direction provided by God’s Word, the slightest temptation is enough to cloud our judgment and lead us astray. By trusting in ourselves instead of actively seeking out the will of God, we are choosing to fly blind. Joshua moved against his enemies, confident that his status as an Israelite child of God was enough to ensure victory, and many today have fallen into the same trap. ***Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*** (Prov. 16:18). God does not work that way. Being called a Christian does not give us an edge. Our battles can only be won by accepting the love, care, and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

Thought for the Day: *We are encouraged to act independently so as not to place unnecessary burdens on others, but when this independence excludes God, it becomes nothing more than sinful pride.*

Christ Revealed: Through the uncut stones at the altar (Josh. 8:31). Daniel saw Christ as a Stone which was not cut by human hands (Dan. 2:34,45). Jesus is our **Chief Corner Stone** (1 Pet. 2:6-8; Matt. 21:42).

Word Studies: 7:1 **anger of the LORD was kindled** = fierceness of His anger (7:26); 7:2 **view** = explore; 7:6 **rent** = tore; **put dust upon their heads** = expressed intense sorrow by defiling their heads; 7:9 **environ us** = surround us; 7:11 **dissembled** = deceived; 7:13 **sanctify** = consecrate, cleanse; 7:18 **taken** = chosen; 7:26 **Achor** = Trouble; 8:11 **pitched** = camped; 8:13 **liers in wait** = concealed ambushers.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Rep. Morgan Griffith (VA), Rep. Jason Crow (CO) • **Country:** Tonga (106,440) South Pacific Ocean • Major Languages: Tongan, English • Religious Freedom • 64.9% Protestant; 16.8% Mormon; 15.6% Roman Catholic; 2.7% Other/ None/ Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Be specific in your prayers (Luke 18:41-43).

Optional Reading: John 6

And from Lachish Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it, and fought against it: And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish (Josh. 10:34-35).

Today's reading offers us a study in contrasts. Through Israel's mighty victories, we are shown the power of what can happen when a nation wholeheartedly follows the commands of God. Yet, as we read of the duplicitous dealings of the Gibeonites, we are reminded once again of how quickly we can go astray when we look to the wisdom of men rather than God. ***Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding*** (Prov. 3:5).

After the news of Joshua's victories over Jericho and Ai, five kings united together in an attempt to push back against the Israelites and run them out of the land of Canaan. One city-state, Gibeon, decided to try a different tactic. Instead of mounting an assault, they determined to sue for a peaceful alliance. Having heard rumors of Israel's intent to clear the land of its current inhabitants, they opted for an undercover approach. They disguised themselves as travel-weary ambassadors from a far-off land and approached Joshua and the elders of Israel with peace offerings. ***And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them*** (Josh. 9:14-15).

By not asking ***counsel at the mouth of the LORD*** (who knew perfectly well who these so-called travelers were), the Israelites trapped themselves between their sacred vow to form an alliance with the Gibeonites and the Lord's strict commands against showing mercy to or making covenants with the pagan inhabitants of Canaan (Deut. 7:2). Once the deception was discovered, Joshua decreed that the Gibeonites would forever be considered servants of the people of God, but it was still the Israelites that ultimately suffered the most. The

Gibeonites, along with their false religions and pagan lifestyle, now had protected status in the community of Israel. Temptation had taken up permanent residence on their doorstep, and the Israelites had a long history of weakness when it came to worldly temptations.

After their disastrous encounter with Gibeon, Joshua and his men renewed their faith in the Lord. When faced with the mighty fighting force of 5 combined kings, they heeded God's promise (Josh. 10:8) and confidently marched forward. So great was their commitment to the will of God that they fought for Him as one, and His power shone out for all to see. ***And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day*** (10:13).

God has the wisdom, the power, and the desire to utilize each of us to our full potential in His glorious service, but the only way that can happen is if we continually stay in contact with Him. Only by opening ourselves in ALL things to the influence of His perfect will can we hope to hold to the path He has set before us.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (Eph. 1:17).

Thought for the Day: *Straying from God is as simple as believing there is a decision to make that does not require His counsel.*

Christ Revealed: As the One through whom we have victory (Josh. 10:25). ***Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*** (1 Cor. 15:57).

Word Studies: 9:1 **great sea** = Mediterranean Sea; 9:4 **wilily** = craftily; **wine bottles** = wineskins; **rent** = torn; 9:5 **clouted** = patched; 9:6 **league** = treaty; 9:9 **Name** = awesome reputation; 9:15 **sware** = ratified it with an oath in the Name of God.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Julia Letlow (LA) • **Country:** Trinidad and Tobago (1,223,916) Caribbean • Major Languages: English, Caribbean Hindustani • Religious Freedom • 32.1% Protestant; 21.6% Roman Catholic; 18.2% Hindu; 5% Muslim; 1.5% Jehovah's Witness; 8.4% Other; 2.2% None; 11% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Watch and pray that you may be worthy to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 21:36).

Optional Reading: John 7

With whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan eastward, even as Moses the servant of the LORD gave them; From Aroer, that is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain of Medeba unto Dibon; And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon; And Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, and all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salcah; All the kingdom of Og in Bashan, which reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants: for these did Moses smite, and cast them out. Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day (Josh. 13:8-13).

In today's reading, the Israelites enter into a period of transition. **So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war** (Josh. 11:23). For seven years, they had been on the offensive, initiating battles and actively working to clear the land God had given them of its previous inhabitants. Now, the time had come for them to switch gears. The time for preparing the land for settlement had passed; it was now time for them to take full possession and assert their 'ownership' of the land they had been given. **Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh** (13:7).

And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses (22:9). For the children of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, this time would have been bittersweet. The cessation of war

meant the time had come for them to part from their brethren and return home to their families and the land they had chosen across the river Jordan. By their own request, they would receive no inheritance within the boundaries of the land which God had established for His people. They had requested for their inheritance (and received) possession of land on the far side of the river. Joshua 13 contains an official recording of that inheritance, with verses 15-32 serving as a deed of record. Although the choice had been made many years earlier, before even setting foot into Canaan, this chapter finalizes their separation from the remaining tribes and underscores the permanent nature of that separation.

As we continue our study of God's Word, we will find very few additional references to these two-and-a-half tribes, either positive or negative, as if when they withdrew from full fellowship, they also withdrew from participation in God's narrative and faded back into the world. Until, at last, we read:

And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day (1 Chr. 5:25-26).

Thought for the Day: *There can be no peaceful life for those who live without God; peace is a blessing only He can offer.*

Christ Portrayed: By ***Moses the servant of the LORD*** (Josh. 12:6). Jesus was the Servant of God. ***Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen*** (Matt. 12:18).

Word Studies: 11:4 **hosts** = army; 11:5 **were met together** = joined forces; 11:6 **hough** = hamstring; 12:3 **Sea of Chinne-roth** = Sea of Galilee; **Sea of the plain, even Salt Sea** = Dead Sea; 13:22 **soothsayer** = diviner, fortune teller.

Pray For Government Official: Rep. David Joyce (OH) • **Country:** Tunisia (10,937,521) Northern Africa • Major Languages: Arabic, French • Islamic state • 99.1% Muslim; 0.8% Other (Christian, Jewish, Shia, Muslim, Bahai) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Intercede in prayer for others by name (Luke 22:31-32).

Optional Reading: John 8

Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God (Josh. 14:7-8).

If we were to diligently search God's Word, seeking a role model for living by faith, we would be hard-pressed to find a better example than Caleb, one of the original twelve men sent out by Moses to survey the Promised Land. It was Caleb who, along with Joshua, passionately pleaded with the people to trust God and enter Canaan. ***And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it (Num. 13:30).*** Forty-five years later, Caleb again stood before the people and spoke out in faith, confidently claiming the blessing promised to him by the Lord. ***Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said (Josh. 14:12).***

Through a combination of word and deed, Caleb displayed four spiritual characteristics that are often sadly lacking today. First, he was true to his convictions. He knew what was right in the eyes of God, and he refused to keep silent about it, even in the face of extreme opposition and criticism. He knew the Word of God, and he was obedient to it. As a result, he was a man of deep faith. ***So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).***

Second, not only was Caleb unafraid to speak of his convictions, he was also unafraid to act. ***I wholly followed the LORD my God.*** Caleb was unaffected by what others said or did. His actions were guided solely by the commands of God, and the only reward that He sought was to fulfill his Master's will. At the age of 85, he was still ready and willing to move against the Canaanite giants, knowing that ***if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out.***

The third thing that stands out about Caleb is his personal relationship with the Lord. Caleb referred to ***the LORD my God***. He was not merely following “the God of his fathers” but instead walking the path personally laid out for him by the living God he served. He loved the Lord, and he knew that the Lord loved him.

The last spiritual characteristic that set Caleb apart from many of his fellow Israelites was his trust in the Lord and the power of His Word. It was enough for Caleb that ***the LORD said***. He didn’t need any further explanation. Through the grace of God, that trust had been transformed into unassailable faith. Caleb stood for God—without doubt, without worry, and without fear. If Caleb could understand so little yet have such perfect faith, how can we accept any less of ourselves when we have been blessed with the full knowledge of Jesus Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18).

Thought for the Day: *When our actions are fueled by our confidence in God, the strength of our faith determines the certainty with which we take them.*

Christ Portrayed: By Caleb, who ***wholly followed the LORD*** (Josh. 14:8,14). Our Savior said: ***Lo, I come . . . to do Thy will, O God*** (Heb. 10:7,9).

Word Studies: 14:4 **save** = except; **suburbs** = pasture lands; 14:7 **espy out** = make a search; 14:8 **wholly followed** = obeyed wholeheartedly; 14:9 **sware** = promised under oath; 14:12 **fenced** = fortified; 14:15 **rest** = enjoyed peace; 15:6 **stone** = boundary marker.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Country:** Turkey (81,619,392) Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia • Major Languages: Turkish, Kurdish • Although religious speech and conversions are legal, some Muslims, Christians, and Bahais faced government restrictions, surveillance, and harassment for alleged proselytizing. • 99.8% Sunni Muslim; 0.2% Other (Christian, Jews, Baha’i) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask that God’s will be done in your life (Luke 22:42).

Optional Reading: John 9

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them (Josh. 18:1).

For 39 years, the Tabernacle of God had preceded the Israelites through the wilderness. For nearly seven years after that, it had been assembled at Gilgal, just off to the east of where the city of Jericho had stood. Now, it was being permanently assembled at Shiloh (meaning a place of rest). At long last, the journey of the Israelites was over. ***And the land was subdued before them.*** They had come into their inheritance, and God had chosen a central point to ***put His name*** in their midst. ***But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee*** (Deut. 12:5-7).

Although God had instructed Joshua to begin parceling out the land even before the Tabernacle arrived in Shiloh (Josh. 13:7-8), there were still seven tribes that had not yet moved to claim their share. The tribes of Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin had all hung back, seemingly content to remain a united, nomadic band under the leadership of Joshua. This, however, was not the Lord's will. He had brought them into the land to possess it fully and to establish therein a great nation (Gen. 12:2; Deut. 1:8). ***And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you? Give out from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come again to me*** (Josh 18:3-4).

It was not enough for the people to simply be in the Promised Land; God required that they commit to it. The same level of commitment is required of us today. When we choose to follow Christ, we are choosing to turn our lives over to him—mind, body, heart, and soul—we can hold nothing back. ***He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal*** (John 12:25). He is offering us a place in the family of God, but we have to step up and accept that offer. We must claim it, just as the Israelites had to move forward and claim their lot in Canaan. They had to quit thinking in terms of a future Promised Land and begin thinking of Israel, the culmination of that promise.

Our life in Jesus Christ begins now. When we accept Him as our Savior, we automatically accept the fulfillment of all of His promises, past, present, and future. That means that we must live for Him in the here and now, embracing the life he has given us by giving all that we are to Him.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:2).

Thought for the Day: *It is not enough to stand in a Church; we must worship. It is not enough to bow our heads and clasp our hands; we must pray.*

Christ Revealed: Through Shiloh. ***The children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the Tabernacle*** (Josh. 18:1). The Tabernacle was located at Shiloh, meaning “peace”; the Tabernacle was where the presence of God dwelt and both the place and the Tabernacle were prophetic of Jesus. ***These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace*** (John 16:33).

Word Studies: 17:1 **man of war** = great soldier; 17:13 **waxen strong** = grown stronger; 18:4 **describe** = draw a descriptive map; 18:10 **divisions** = family groups; 18:12 **the goings out thereof** = its outer limits.

Pray For Country: Turkmenistan (5,171,943) Central Asia • Major Language: Turkmen • Government Controlled Religious Activities • 89% Muslim; 9% Eastern Orthodox; 2% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for a spirit of humility and submission before the Lord (John 3:30-31).

Optional Reading: John 10

And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand (Josh. 21:43-44).

God had given Abraham His Word, and from that moment on, no power in the universe could have prevented that Word from being fulfilled. ***And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Gen. 17:7-8).*** Although His chosen nation had frequently stumbled in their faith and commitment, God remained steadfast in His.

The Israelites stood before Joshua in the land of Canaan, believing that God's Covenant had been fulfilled in its entirety. ***And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.*** God had promised them a permanent homeland as an everlasting possession, and He had promised He would be their God. Both of these conditions had been met, so the Israelites were content. Had they understood the deeper promise contained within that Covenant, they would have known that their journey with God, rather than having been completed, was just beginning. ***For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people (Heb. 8:10).***

Today, we have the privilege of living in a time when God's glorious promise has been fully revealed. He has promised to be our God, not just for a lifetime on this earth, but for all eternity. Through the work of Christ, death has been defeated—Satan has lost. ***Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of***

flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (2:14-15). As was the case with His initial promise to Abraham, no power in heaven or on earth can prevent His promise from being fulfilled.

We must always remember, though, that God will fulfill His promises with or without us. His Covenant has been made with His people—the ones that form the body of Christ's church on this earth (Rom. 12:5). While the Lord led the Israelite NATION into Canaan, many individuals chose to turn from God and were lost along the way. Unless we surrender ourselves fully to Christ and claim our position as a child of God and a member of the body of Christ, all we will be able to do will be to look on in despair when the day of total fulfillment arrives.

There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass (Josh. 21:45).

Thought for the Day: *It is not God we fail but ourselves when we don't follow the path He has set, nor is His work stymied by our stubbornness.*

Christ Portrayed: By Eleazar, the chief priest (Josh. 21:1; Num. 3:32). Jesus Christ is our High Priest. ***The . . . High Priest of our profession (confession), Christ Jesus*** (Heb. 3:1).

Word Studies: 20:2 **Appoint out** = Choose; 20:3 **unwittingly** = without premeditation; 20:4 **declare his cause** = state his case; 20:5 **hated him not** = was without malice; 20:9 **stranger** = alien resident; **sojourneth** = temporarily dwells among them; **at unawares** = by accident; 21:1 **heads** = leaders; 21:4 **lot** = share.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • Government Officials: Rep. Keith Self (TX) • **Country:** Turks and Caicos Islands (49,070) North Atlantic Ocean • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • 72.8% Protestant; 11.4% Roman Catholic; 1.8% Jehovah's Witness; 14% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Your prayers must be offered to God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:22-24).

Optional Reading: John 11

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good (Josh. 24:19-20).

And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass (Josh. 21:43-45). After seven years of near-constant conflict, God had brought peace to the land of Israel. No longer was a standing army required; each man was now free to return to the land God had granted him. Yet even though the land was at peace, Joshua was troubled by the fact that the Israelites had not succeeded in fully driving out the previous inhabitants of the land (16:10; 17:13; 23:67). He well remembered the warning God had given to Moses, and he feared for the spiritual health of the people. ***But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell (Num. 33:55).***

With this concern in the forefront of his mind, Joshua addressed the people for the last time. Just as Moses had before him, Joshua tried to make the people see their need for God. He had first-hand experience with the fickle nature of the heart of God's people. He worried that now that the battle was over, the fear that had bound them to the Lord would dissipate, and they would become susceptible to the siren call of the pagan cultures that they had foolishly allowed to remain in their midst. Joshua urged them to always keep God in the forefront of their thoughts. He warned them of the trouble that would come unless they actively chose to serve God.

To serve God fully, we must consciously choose to follow Him and Him alone. ***I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before (besides) me*** (Ex. 20:2-3). Our God is a jealous God (20:5), and He will tolerate no other. The Israelites had stopped short of God's command to clear the land of its original inhabitants, and Joshua challenged them to choose once and for all to whom their loyalty belonged. He didn't urge them to think about it, nor did he encourage them to 'try their best' to follow God's Laws. He commanded them to make a permanent choice and then to stand as **witnesses** to (live their lives in declarative proof of) their decision.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey (Josh. 24:22-24).

Thought for the Day: *True victory over sin can only be achieved with God and a lifetime of devotion following rebirth into the body of Christ (no matter how long or short that life may be).*

Christ Revealed: Through the peace offering (Josh. 22:27). Our Lord offered Himself to God as our means of peace with the Father. ***Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*** (Rom. 5:1).

Word Studies: 22:9 **were possessed** = had acquired; 22:10 **to see to** = for all to see; 22:19 **unclean** = unfit; 22:20 **accursed** = banned; 22:23 **require it** = call us to account; 22:25 **fearing** = having reverential heartfelt submission to; 22:27 **part** = share; 22:34 **Ed** = Witness; 23:1 **waxed** = grew; 23:4 **cut off** = destroyed; 23:7 **swear** = promise, make a vow; 23:9 **stand before** = withstand.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Country:** Tuvalu (10,782) Southwestern Pacific • Major Languages: Tuvaluan, English • Religious Freedom • 98.4% Protestant; 1% Baha'i; 0.6% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Have faith in the Word of God (John 4:49-53).

Optional Reading: John 12

Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out (Judg. 1:31-32).

The Book of Joshua ended on a note of hope and confidence. The land was divided in accordance with the will of God, and the nation came together and renewed their Covenant with God. ***And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey*** (Josh. 24:24). Afterwards, the people dispersed, each to their own tribe's inheritance, so that they might clear the land of the remaining Canaanites and commence with the lives God had given them. The Book of Judges opens on a similar note, but before even half a chapter has passed, it becomes apparent to even the least observant reader that things are going seriously wrong. Verse after verse, we read the same shocking refrain. ***Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of...*** (Judg. 1:27) ***Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites...*** (1:29). ***Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of...*** (1:30).

Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it (Num. 33:52-53). The Lord's instructions to the Israelites had left no room for discussion. The Promised Land was to be completely cleared of its original inhabitants before the children of Israel settled down to possess the land. Although God would have been well within His rights to issue commands without explanation, in this instance, He chose to reveal the reason behind His directive. ***But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them***

(Num. 33:55-56). Yet even with full knowledge of what their failure would ultimately cost them, the Israelites were unwilling to expend the effort that would be required for full compliance with God's will.

If we could go back in time and ask the Israelites why they allowed the native Canaanites to stay instead of driving them out as the Lord had commanded, we might be surprised at how familiar their answers would sound. Words such as 'compromise,' 'tolerance,' and 'acceptance' would most likely feature prominently in the conversation as they earnestly explained that they had done what they had to do to reconcile their faith in God with the 'real world.'

The problem with this explanation, both then and now, is that the wrong thing is being reconciled. God's love is pure, and His Word is absolute. To refuse any part of it is to reject the whole. There is no way in which our God can be made to 'fit in' with the fallen world that surrounds us. God had promised to change the world for the Israelites, but instead, they attempted to change God for the world. They failed, as will anyone else who is foolish enough to try.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

Thought for the Day: *No part of our lives can be tethered to worldly sin if we hope to move into His kingdom.*

Christ Revealed: As ***the Angel of the LORD*** who is understood to be Jesus Himself, for He speaks as God Himself (***I made you . . . and have brought you . . . I swear . . . I said, I will . . . My Covenant***) (Judg. 2:1-4). ***Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am*** (John 8:58).

Word Studies: 1:7 **meat under my table** = leftover food; **requited** = repaid; 1:20 **expelled thence** = drove out, defeated; 1:22 **house** = family; 1:23 **descry** = spy out; 1:27 **would dwell** = determined to remain.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Official:** Sen. Alex Padilla (CA), Rep. Pete Sessions (TX) • **Country:** Uganda (35,918,915) Eastern Africa • **Major Languages:** English, Luganda • **Religious Freedom** • 41.9% Roman Catholic; 42% Protestant; 12.1% Muslim; 3.1% Other; 0.9% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that your life will always be pleasing to God (John 8:29).

Optional Reading: John 13

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel (Judg. 5:1-3).

Today's reading opens with a summary description of the state of the nation of Israel. As a result of their failure to follow His original commandment to utterly possess their new land (Deut. 20:16-18), the Lord allowed many of the Canaanites to remain. ***And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which He commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses*** (Judg. 3:4). Sadly, what was proven was that without strong, centralized godly leadership the Israelites were not disciplined enough to maintain a monogamous relationship with the Lord. ***And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves*** (3:7).

Thus, the cycle that the Israelites would live out again and again over the next 350 years was established. They would begin by freely serving the One True God, but over time, they would gradually fall into a state of apostasy. This would kindle the anger of the Lord (3:8), Who would then turn them over to their enemies. After a period spent in bondage and suffering, The Israelites would remember the Lord of their deliverance, repent, and cry out to Him for rescue. The Lord would then raise up from amongst them a deliverer to free His people, after which they would enjoy a period of peace and good fortune under the leadership of God's appointed judge before once again turning their faces from God.

It is easy for us to focus on the irresponsible, godless actions of the Israelites as we read of the dozen or so times that they turned away from the Lord and of the horrific sins that were committed as a result, but that is not the only lesson that the Lord has for us here. The Book of Judges is overwhelmingly a book of mercy and love. The song of ***Deborah and Barak***

perhaps put it best: ***Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.*** No matter how far the people had gone or how deep and dark their sins might have become, when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord (3:9,15; 4:3), the Lord heard them and answered their call.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The Israelites made more ‘mistakes’ than any one nation had a right to, yet each time they turned from their sin and sought the face of God, He accepted their apology. God’s love for His people was so intense that He never backed down, and He never gave up. Jesus taught that forgiveness in the face of true repentance is limitless. ***Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven*** (Matt. 18:22). Each of us today may take comfort in the fact that no matter the mess we have made of our lives, God is willing to take our call anytime we reach out to Him in true repentance. As long as we have breath in our bodies, it will never be too late to reach out to our Savior and King.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him (Ps. 103:13).

Thought for the Day: *God’s capacity for forgiveness is limitless; we need only humble ourselves and ask for it.*

Christ Portrayed: By Othniel, a deliverer upon whom ***the Spirit of the LORD*** rested (Judg. 3:9-11). The Spirit of God was also upon Christ, our Deliverer (Matt. 3:16). ***There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*** (Rom. 11:26). Jesus declared: ***The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me . . . to preach deliverance to the captives*** (Luke 4:18).

Word Studies: 3:1 **prove** = test; known = experienced; 3:2 **know** = understand; 3:7 **groves** = for idolatry; 3:13 **gathered** = recruited; 3:16 **gird** = fasten.

Pray For Government Official: Rep. Brian Babin (TX) • **Country:** Ukraine (44,291,413) Eastern Europe • Major Languages: Ukrainian, Russian • Religious Freedom • 70.6% Christian Orthodox (various jurisdictions); 5.7% Greek Catholic; 1.3% Roman Catholic; 0.8% Protestant; 0.7% Muslim; 0.3% Jews; 8.6% Other Christian; 12% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** When discouraged over material or financial loss, praise the Lord for preparing and providing an eternal home (John 14:1-3).

Optional Reading: John 14

And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed My voice (Judg. 6:7-10).

Yesterday, we read of the mercy of the Lord and reflected on His faithfulness to His chosen people even in the face of their faithlessness. ***If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny himself*** (II Tim. 2:13). Today, we are reminded that our actions bring with them earthly consequences, even in the presence of God's mercy. Three times, ***the children of Israel*** had ***cried unto the LORD***, and three times, the Lord had rescued them from their tribulations. This time, instead of immediately moving to alleviate their suffering, the Lord took the opportunity to remind His people that it was their willful disobedience that had gotten them into trouble in the first place. ***And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed My voice.***

Nevertheless, the Lord was not blind to their distress, so He sent His messenger to recruit the unlikelyst of heroes, Gideon, son of Joash the Abi-ezrite. Gideon was from the half-tribe of Manasseh that dwelt within the boundaries of the land of Canaan. When ***the angel of the LORD appeared*** to Gideon, the timid young man was threshing his father's wheat on a disguised threshing floor in an attempt to hide from his enemies. Nothing in his personal history or his nature would have led anyone to believe that Gideon had any leadership qualities whatsoever, but that didn't concern God. He instructed His angel to greet the faithful servant that He knew existed deep inside. ***And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him,***

The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour (6:12). God did not require a superman, only a man willing to serve. ***And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee*** (6:14)?

Ultimately, God used Gideon and a grouping of only 300 soldiers to conquer the Midianite army that stood 135,000 strong. Although 32,000 men had answered Gideon's call to arms, the Lord had pared their number to a mere handful. ***And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me*** (7:2). God wanted there to be no question as to Whom the victory belonged. The Midianites were defeated, not because of who was sent, but because of Who did the sending.

No matter what skills we might or might not possess, our use to the Lord is measured only by our willingness to submit to His will. The power is His, and His alone. In all things, to Him be the glory.

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen (Jude 1:25).

Thought for the Day: *If God has called upon you, then there is no one more suitable for the task.*

Christ Revealed: As ***the Sword of the LORD*** (Judg. 7:20). In the Apostle John's revelation of Jesus, ***out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*** (Rev. 1:16). We know that the sword ***is the Word of God*** (Eph. 6:17) and that Jesus is the Word of God ***made flesh*** (John 1:14).

Word Studies: 6:1 **into the hand** = under the control; 6:3 **came up against them** = invaded the country; 6:4 **increase** = produce; **sustenance** = living thing; 6:11 **angel** = messenger; 6:13 **befallen** = happened to.

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Officials:** Sen. Mike Braun (IN) • **Country:** United Arab Emirates (5,628,805) Middle East • **Major Language:** Arabic • Prohibits efforts to convert Muslims and denies Muslims the freedom to change religion • 76% Muslim (Islam - Official); 9% Christian; 15% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask in the Name of Jesus and for His glory, and your request will be granted (John 14:13-14).

Optional Reading: John 15

And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house (Judg. 8:27).

Gideon had been slow to accept the reality of God's call, but once he fully placed himself into God's hands, he was used to bring about amazing things. After bearing witness to God's stunning victory at the enemy camp in which over 120,000 Midianites and their allies had fallen by their own swords (Judg. 7:22), he had taken his army of 300 and tracked down and destroyed the two fleeing Midianite kings and their remaining army of 15,000 men (8:10). Midian, who had ruled cruelly over the Israelites for seven years (6:1), had been vanquished. ***Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon*** (Judg. 8:28). For a period of forty years, Israel once again knew peace.

The grateful Israelites had credited their newly gifted freedom to Gideon. They wanted to take him as their king, but he had refused, citing his allegiance to the absolute authority of the Lord who ruled them all (8:23-24). Although he had declined the title, Gideon had readily accepted the people's accolades. He retired into the lap of luxury, taking for himself many wives and concubines and fathering 70 sons (8:29-31), one of whom he named Abimelech ('the father is king'). He also had a golden ephod fashioned to serve as a permanent reminder of God's greatness. While Gideon's intentions in creating it may have been pure, the ephod soon became a treasured idol in the eyes of the people. ***And all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.*** Although peace continued throughout the land as long as Gideon lived, the stage was set for Israel's next downfall.

How many of us today tend to follow in Gideon's footsteps? We love God, and once convinced that the call is genuine, we are anxious to follow after Him and perform the tasks that He sets in front of us. We excel at following His directions and taking action. However, when the actions have been completed,

and God pauses in His instructing to say, "I have led you; now show Me what you have learned," we falter. Instead of taking the initiative and diving into the Word of God so that we can continue during our time of peace (after the church has been planted, the mission has been established, etc...) to further His kingdom, we sit back and relax, patting ourselves on the backs for having served God so well. We then turn our attention inward, focusing on our own lives while we await the next dramatic 'Call to Service.'

God wants our attention 100% of the time, not just when a big project is in the works. While it might take dramatic action to get His name out there, it is during the quiet times of heartfelt worship and prayer that His kingdom is fortified. When we neglect our responsibilities during these times, we undermine whatever we were able to accomplish for Him during our active phase. When we work for God, our job is never done.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).

Thought for the Day: *We can claim the title of philanthropist while giving the bare minimum or refuse the title of leader while attempting to control everything, but we would do well to remember that titles mean nothing to God.*

Christ Portrayed: By Gideon, who delivered the Israelites from Midian (Judg. 8:22- 23). The Lord Jesus has delivered us out of the hands of our spiritual enemies, and it is fitting that He should rule over us. ***Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world*** (Gal. 1:3-4; II Pet. 2:9; Rom. 11:26).

Word Studies: 8:1 **chide** = contend; 8:3 **was abated** = subsided; 8:7 **tear your flesh** = thrash your bodies; 8:9 **peace** = triumph; 8:12 **discomfited** = routed.

Pray For Bible Pathway Printer: Pollock Printing, Nashville, TN • **Country:** United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, & Wales) (63,742,977) Western Europe Islands • **Major Language:** English • **Religious Freedom** • 59.5% Christian (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist); 4.4% Muslim; 1.3% Hindu; 2% Other; 25.7% None; 7.1% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** If the words of God abide in you, whatever you ask in prayer you will receive (John 15:7).

Optional Reading: John 16

And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir. And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died, and was buried in Camon. And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord, and served not Him (Judg. 10:1-6).

The further we go into the Book of Judges, the more one distressing fact becomes clear: while the Israelites were, for the most part, willing to follow the directives of a charismatic human leader, they did not accept any personal responsibility for maintaining their faith themselves. If they were being communally herded under the principles of God, they were content to go in that direction. But if a Godly leader weren't readily available, they would follow the established worldly path of least resistance, only calling out to God once the mounting consequences of their sinful choices reached unbearable levels.

Over and over, this cycle repeated itself. Following the death of Joshua, Israel retreated from God and fell under the control of the Edomites. Under the judgeship of Othniel, they revived their faith, but once he was gone, they soon turned away (Judg. 3:9-11). When life under Moabite control became too much to bear, they cried out to God, and He sent them Ehud (3:15-30). Following the death of Ehud, apostasy took over the people once again, and they fell under the control of a Canaanite king, who ruled until the rise of Deborah and Barak (4:1-24). When their leadership ceased, the void was filled by the Midianites and Amalekites, under whom Israel suffered for seven years. God then recruited Gideon, whom the Israelites loved so much they attempted to crown him king (Judg. 6, 7, 8). After a brief

period where the people tried to follow Gideon's evil son Abimelech, God installed first Tola and then Jair to draw His people's attention back to Him. Following the death of Jair, the people immediately reverted to type and began lusting after the gods of their pagan neighbors.

Is it any wonder that, at this point, God said enough was enough? The next time the Israelites cried out for deliverance, they were shocked at His immediate reply: ***Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation*** (10:14). For the first time in centuries, God's response was fair and just, and they didn't know how to handle that. Only after they took their first, tentative steps towards true repentance (10:15-16) did God temper His response with mercy and, through Jephthah, deliver them once again.

God's love for us is infinite; His mercy and grace flow from an endless supply. But that does not mean He will continually clean up our messes every time we ask and allow us to escape personal responsibility for our choices. God 'owes' us nothing, and when we hypocritically seek His help without any sincere intention to change ourselves, nothing may be exactly what we receive.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Gal. 6:7).

Thought for the Day: *When we seek God merely to repair our lives, we will only find disappointment; when we understand that it is our souls that need maintenance, we will find redemption.*

Christ Portrayed: By Jephthah's only child as she wholly submitted to her father's will even as Jesus wholly submitted to His Father's will (Judg. 11:34-40). On the night He was betrayed, Jesus prayed: ***Not as I will, but as Thou wilt*** (Matt. 26:39).

Word Studies: 10:8 **vexed** = afflicted; 10:14 **cry** = call; 11:2 **strange** = foreign; 11:3 **vain** = renegade; 11:23 **dispossessed** = driven out; 11:34 **timbrels** = tambourines; 11:35 **opened thy mouth** = spoke.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Nancy Pelosi (CA), Rep. Laurel Lee (FL) • **Country:** United States (318,892,103) North America • Major Languages: English, Spanish • Religious Freedom • 51.3% Protestant; 23.9% Roman Catholic; 1.7% Mormon; 1.6% Other Christian; 1.6% Jewish; 0.7% Buddhist; 0.6% Muslim; 2.5% Other/Unspecified; 12.1% Unaffiliated; 4% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-8).

Optional Reading: John 17

And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well (Judg. 14:2-3).

For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines (Judg. 13:5). Samson's role as a Judge of Israel had been heralded by an angelic messenger prior to his conception and eagerly anticipated by his joyful parents. ***And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him*** (13:24). Scripture tells us little of his childhood, but we know he grew to adulthood enjoying the blessings of God and that the Spirit of the Lord was active within him.

Chapter 14 of the Book of Judges offers us our first glimpse of Samson as a fully grown adult, and what we see is not encouraging. Going against both the directives of God (Deut. 7:3) and the admonitions of his parents, Samson resolves to marry a Philistine woman. As preparations are being made for the wedding feast, Samson then enters into an expensive, foolish wager with his 30 groomsmen, challenging them to solve the riddle he poses before the end of the 7-day feast. When the bet is won by the groomsmen through the deceptive manipulation of Samson's new bride, he reacts with fierce anger. He slaughters 30 Philistines from a neighboring town, loots them of their garments and possessions, and uses the spoils to pay his wager to his groomsmen. Then, he abandons his wife and returns to his father's home.

This narrative reads much more like the exploits of a spoiled, self-centered teen than that of a God-appointed judge of Israel. Samson's impulsivity, desire for self-gratification, temper, and lack of moral code are on full display. Although he did sow

seeds of fear and unrest amongst the enemies of Israel, he did it for purely personal reasons, not to better the conditions of his people or forward the cause of God. Yet even though Samson was acting solely in his own interests, God's plan was not being thwarted. Twice in this chapter, we are told that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, granting him the strength to accomplish his chosen task (14:6,19). Regardless of intent and likely without ever realizing it, Samson was used by the Lord, just as the angel had foretold.

Today's reading offers us comfort by illustrating that God's plan is greater than the sum of those He employs to enact it. It cannot be derailed by humans, either purposefully or accidentally. But the reading also brings us a somber warning. Just because God has chosen us for a role in the furtherment of His plan does not mean that we are exempted from the need to choose Him in return. His plan will be accomplished, but unless we fully embrace it and join with the body of Christ, we will still be lost.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

Thought for the Day: *God's hand is on every life, even those who don't acknowledge Him. Should they ever come to recognize His guidance, He is prepared to deliver them immediately.*

Christ Portrayed: By Samson, who, as a Nazarite, was to be consecrated **to God from the womb** (birth) **to the day of his death** (Judg. 13:7). Jesus was also set apart and consecrated to God from the womb to the day of His death on the cross. Unlike Samson, who failed God, Jesus totally fulfilled the plan of God as He said He would do when He left heaven saying: **Lo, I come . . . to do Thy will, O God** (Heb. 10:7).

Word Studies: 12:5 **took the passages of Jordan** = seized the fords; 12:6 **frame** = enunciate, pronounce; 13:6 **very terrible** = very awesome; 13:18 **secret** = wonderful beyond understanding; 14:4 **occasion against** = opportunity to destroy, but once again Samson became sidetracked; 14:12 **sheets** = linen robes, shawls; 14:13 **declare** = solve; 14:16 **hate** = have no love; 14:17 **lay sore upon** = persisted; 14:19 **expounded** = solved.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Country:** Uruguay (3,332,972) South America • Major Language: Spanish • Religious Freedom • 47.1% Roman Catholic; 11.1% Protestant; 23.2% Nondenominational; 0.3% Jewish; 17.2% Atheist/Agnostic; 1.1% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask according to the will of God in the Name of Jesus and you will receive (John 16:24).

Optional Reading: John 18

But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in. And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her. And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure (Judg. 15:1-3). Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire. And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease (Judg. 15:6-7).

Chapter 14 of the Book of Judges ended with Solomon angrily returning to his father's house, leaving his wife behind. In response, his father-in-law voided the marriage contract and gave Samson's bride to one of the groomsmen for his wife. Chapter 15 picks up an unspecified amount of time later with Samson returning to the Philistine village with the intent of having marital relations with his wife. After discovering what his father-in-law did, Samson flew into a rage and enacted vengeance on the entire village, burning all their crops, harvests, and vineyards to the ground. From there, the cycle of anger and vengeance continued unabated.

The Philistine villagers couldn't attack Samson directly, so they burned his wife and father-in-law to death. Samson was further angered by this and, in turn, slaughtered all the villagers. This caught the attention of the Philistine nation as a whole, and they came down on the men of Judah, over whom they currently ruled, which prompted Samson's kinsmen to bind him and turn him over to the Philistines for judgment. After being brought before the Philistines, God imbued Samson with the might of the Holy Spirit, and Samson broke free, snagged a bone from the ground, and wiped out the Philistine army surrounding him,

thus fulfilling the promise God made before his birth: ***For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*** (Judg. 13:5).

There are those who will hold up this chapter and proclaim Samson's actions righteous, claiming that since they brought about the furtherment of God's plan, the end justifies the means. Others will use it to decry what they perceive as the violent, immoral nature of God, claiming that He was the author and illustrator of all that transpired. The truth is that Samson acted of his own volition, motivated by self-righteous anger, and set into motion a series of events that God then used for His purposes. God did not need, nor did He inspire or instigate, Samson's lust, anger, or desire for vengeance. God's plan would have just as easily been fulfilled (likely with far less bloodshed and certainly with far more grace on the principal player, Samson) if Samson had humbly set himself to serve God and live under the auspices of His word. God can and will use our sins to bring about good, but He will never condone or accept them.

For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with Thee (Ps. 5:4).

Thought for the Day: *Though the wicked of the world oppose His teachings and His will, they will never hinder Him in any way.*

Christ Revealed: Through the strength God gave to Samson for his last victory over the Philistines (Judg. 16:28-30). ***I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*** (Phil. 4:13).

Word Studies: 15:2 **I verily though** = I felt sure; **hated** = disliked; 15:3 **a displeasure** = great evil; 15:4 **firebrands** = torches; 15:8 **cleft** = cave or cliff; 15:10 **bind** = capture; 15:17 **Ra'math-le'hi** = hill of the jawbone.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Rep. Nydia Velazquez (NY), Rep. Pat Ryan (NY) • **Country:** Uzbekistan (28,929,716) Central Asia • Major Language: Uzbek • Limited religious freedom due to Islamic influence • 88% Muslim; 9% Eastern Orthodox; 3% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that Christians would be united as Christ and God are one (John 17:11,21).

Optional Reading: John 19

And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee (Judg. 18:24)?

When Joshua cast lots to divide the Promised Land between God's people (Josh. 18:10), considerable territory was given to the tribe of Dan. ***And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families. And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Ir-shemesh, And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah, And Elon, and Thimnathah, and Ekron, And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath, And Jehud, and Bene-berak, and Gath-rimmon, And Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Japho*** (Josh. 19:40-46). This should have left them well-situated, but in defiance of God's will, they neglected to drive out the original pagan inhabitants. As a result, the Lord withdrew His support, ***and the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley*** (Judg. 1:34).

Having failed to occupy the land allotted to them, they searched for a land that would be easier to commandeer (18:1). They did not do this at the behest of God, nor did they pray for guidance or clarification of His will. Instead, driven solely by the desires of their hearts, they left the territory given to them by God and, without warning, attacked and utterly destroyed Laish, a peaceful city that God had not designated for occupation or destruction (18:27).

The aggression of the Danites was not confined to attacking those they considered their enemies. On the march to Laish, the fighting men of Dan temporarily turned from their journey so that they could plunder the household of Micah, a fellow Israelite. The actions of the tribe of Dan were deeply disturbing, but it is when we read the account of their victim's complaint that we realize just how far Israel had fallen as a whole.

Micah was a 'good man' who believed in his heart that he was a follower of God. To that end, he had hired a nomadic Levite to serve as his personal priest, and he had in his possession

multiple religious relics made of pure gold, the most precious amongst them being a household idol (representing God) to which he addressed his prayers and worship (17:4-5). When these items were taken, Micah was beside himself with fear and grief. ***And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more?*** Micah was sincere in his belief, but his sincerity did not make him any less wrong. His idols and the self-appointed priest in whom he had placed his faith were worthless; they in no way represented the Almighty God. Although he had been robbed, he had been left with just as much as he had in the first place – absolutely nothing.

God cannot be made, He cannot be possessed, and He cannot be taken away by the actions of others. It is only through our own actions or inactions that we can separate ourselves from His presence. Micah and the raiding men of Dan were opposites in many ways, but they both were well and truly lost. By willfully turning away from the Word and seeking their own path, they had lost sight of the only one that would lead them to God.

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:14).

Thought for the Day: *Often, when we feud amongst ourselves and wrong one another, we assume that God is with one side or the other. However, it is more likely that each side is equally lost.*

Christ Revealed: *In those days there was no King in Israel* (Judg. 18:1). Christ was the rejected King of Israel. ***Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar*** (John 19:15).

Word Studies: 18:2 **coasts** = territory; 18:9 **still** = when are you still here; 18:15 **saluted** = greeted; 18:19 **lay thine hand upon thy mouth** = stop complaining or suffer the consequences; 18:21 **carriage** = goods.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Ted Lieu (CA), Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (NV) Rep. Jasmine Crockett (TX) • **Country:** Vanuatu (266,937) South Pacific O, ceana • **Major Languages:** More than 100 local languages, Bislama • **Religious Freedom** • 70% Protestant; 12.4% Roman Catholic; 3.7% Customary Beliefs; 12.6% Other; 1.1% None; 0.2% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray that you would be sanctified through the truth of the Word of God (John 17:17).

Optional Reading: John 20

Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. And the children of Israel inquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand (Judg. 20:26-28).

If we read the above verses in isolation, we might be led to believe that the nation of Israel as a whole (with the exception of the tribe of Benjamin) was on the right track, following the dictates of God. We would be heartened to see them turning to the Lord for guidance and direction before taking action and would assume their day-to-day lives were likely modeled on the same principle. Sadly, all of our assumptions would be wrong. ***In those days, there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*** (Judg. 21:25). Although the horror that had been perpetrated in Gibeah had temporarily united them and turned their focus to God, it was only a reflexive response to the tragedy of the moment.

Even as they sought the Lord's directives regarding warring with the tribe of Benjamin, they allowed their anger at the situation to push them into making rash oaths (21:1,5) against the Benjamites. Oaths that would, if kept, ensure the extinction of the tribe. After their anger cooled, they realized their mistake and regretted their vows, but they were not further motivated to seek God's guidance. Instead, they fashioned their own solution. ***And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children. And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man. And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four***

hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan (21:10-12). These men who went to war over a single murder now cheerfully ordered the slaughter of an entire village, convinced that it would ‘fix’ their mistake and allow them to remain honorable and blameless before God.

This sort of twisted moral thinking is alive and well today. We call ourselves Christian and respond to violent tragedies with the appropriate words of outrage and prayer, but we point-blank refuse to strictly align ourselves with the directives of His Word even as we claim to worship Him. We will go to war over what we see as the transgressions of others, but we are blind to our own missteps and misplaced allegiances, arguing that we are only doing what is necessary to ensure the survival of Christianity in an increasingly hostile world. Loving and trusting God means following Him at all times—not just when it is convenient to do so. It means obeying and championing His Word in all things—not just the parts we find ‘acceptable’ by modern standards. Most of all, it means humbling ourselves before Him and earnestly praying, as Christ taught us to pray:

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

Thought for the Day: *Dismissing God when His morals do not align with our interests is a sure sign of lukewarm faith.*

Christ Revealed: As our Deliverer (Judg. 20:26-28). As we pray and seek the Lord’s will, He delivers us from all evil forces. ***Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God (Gal. 1:3-4).***

Word Studies: 20:5 **forced** = raped; 20:6 **lewdness and folly** = licentiousness and disgrace; 20:13 **Be’li-al** = worthless perverts; 20:34 **sore** = fierce; 20:35 **drew the sword** = were experienced soldiers; 20:38 **sign** = signal; 20:40 **flame ascended up to heaven** = went up in flames; 20:41 **amazed** = terrified; 20:42 **turned their backs** = retreated, fled; 20:43 **trod them down** = overtook them; **sunrising** = east.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Gerry Connolly (VA) • **Country:** Vatican City (842) Rome, Italy • **Major Languages:** Italian, Latin • **Religious Freedom** • Roman Catholic • **Prayer Suggestion:** Rejoice that our Savior lives (John 20:15-18).

Optional Reading: John 21

And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do (Ruth 2:2-4).

Ruth was a Moabitess, banned from the congregation of Israel by law and tradition (Deut. 23:3). Her story, then, is one of double redemption. Before she ever met Boaz, before he ever covered her with his skirt (Ruth 3:9-13) and fulfilled the role of family redeemer (Ruth 4:9-10), she was covered by grace and redeemed by God Himself.

When Elimelech took his family and fled to Moab to escape the famine in Israel, he acted out of self-preservation rather than faith. The same can be said for his sons' decisions to take Moabite wives. If they were to marry, the Moabites were the only women available, so they felt their choice was justified despite God's decree against intermarrying. All three men died without ever returning to their homeland, still under the misguided belief that forging their own path had been necessary and right.

In death, they left behind three devastated, childless widows. As an older woman past childbearing age, Naomi accepted her fate and prepared to return to her homeland, her faith in God all she had left to cling to. Orpah and Ruth had considerably more options. Both were young widows, relieved of obligation through the death of their husbands and the release of their mother-in-law. They could return to their mother's homes, find new husbands, and get on with their lives. Although it clearly grieved her to do so (Ruth 1:9-14), Orpah did just that. Ruth, on the other hand, clung to Naomi. ***And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the***

LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (1:16-17).

In the first act of genuine faith we see in today's reading, Ruth turns her back on everything she ever knew, gives up her religion, parents, siblings, extended family, culture, and country, and resolves to follow God's path. ***If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple*** (Luke 14:26-27). Ruth had every incentive to turn back and none to go forward, yet still she continued on. Love for Naomi and the burning spark of faith she did not yet understand spurred her onward. Just as she would later lay down at the feet of Boaz, Ruth laid herself down at the feet of God, and in that moment of surrender, she became a child of God.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him (Acts 10:34-35).

Thought for the Day: *Salvation can be found even through the folly of others. With God, all is possible.*

Christ Revealed: Through Bethlehem (Ruth 2:4; 4:11), which means "House of Bread." Jesus, the ***Bread of Life***, satisfies the spiritual hunger of all who come to Him. ***Then Jesus said unto them . . . I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger*** (John 6:32-35).

Word Studies: 1:1 **sojourn** = temporarily live; 1:2 **continued** = stayed; 1:8 **the dead** = their dead husbands; 1:16 **Intreat** = Ask; 1:18 **minded** = determined; 1:19 **moved** = concerned; 2:2 **glean** = gather leftover; **corn** = grain; 2:8 **fast by** = close to.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Rep. Tony Cardenas (CA), , Rep. Stephen Lynch (MA), Sen. Angus King (ME), Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (CA) • **Country:** Venezuela (28,868,486) Northern South America • Major Language: Spanish • Religious Freedom (anti-semitism by gov't owned/affiliated media & gov't religious intimidation) • 96% Roman Catholic; 2% Protestant; 2% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray in one accord with other Christians.

Optional Reading: Acts 1

Become part of the vision

Jesus fed the 5000 with just five loaves and two fishes. There are multitudes of people in this world still hungering for His Word.

Thousands of souls die each day with no knowledge of the saving grace of our Father in Heaven.

As Christians, God has commissioned us to tell of Him and witness to the unbelievers that they may know Him. God is leading Bible Pathway Ministries to send out an additional 5000 Bibles and devotionals monthly, starting in January 2024. For this project to become a reality, I must ask in Jesus' precious name for your financial support in this endeavor. The estimated cost for this mission is \$250,000.00.

We are stepping out in faith and preparing the first shipment, trusting that God will make it possible. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him (1 John 5:14-15).