

SERMON: FIGHTING THE GIANTS**GOOD Morning OIC AND WELCOME TO FATHER'S HOUSE**

Today, we will see the history of God's Chosen People, the Israelites, expand further into their Promised Land of Canaan. I closed my last Message with the following words:

We Christians are those twinkling stars that Abraham saw in the heart of God as he gazed on the visible stars in the sky. Every time we pray in the name of Jesus, God acts to respond to us even as He did with Moses and Joshua. Jesus' name deserves the BEST here and now. We just find ourselves asking even the *impossible* that will give glory to Jesus on Earth.

When we consider how God stoops low to make us great, we might think twice before we question His judgments in life and death events. He could have destroyed Mankind at many places in History where we had worshiped false gods, especially ourselves. If He had, He would still be Holy and Blameless. He chooses to save many people from every tribe and nation who will give honor to Him through their relationship with His Son Jesus. The Bible says in (1 John 4.8) *But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* Remember only the One who is Love should have such authority as to choose when to Curse- to Bless- and to Give Mercy.

Today, we will read of God's judgment on a willful disobedience to His Command. I also will show how the GIANTS we see or feel can be defeated by our God. Through Joshua's words the Lord had clearly warned the Israelite soldiers not to take for themselves any "spoils of war" or, material goods from Jericho. Joshua repeated the instructions from the Lord in **(Joshua 6.17-19)** *17 Jericho and everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies. 18 "Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on the camp of Israel. 19 Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury."* And we read in last week's Message in **(Joshua 7.1)** *But Israel violated the instructions about the things set apart for the Lord.*

A man named Achan had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the Lord was very angry with the Israelites.

Now, on the same day that Israel was defeated at Ai, God will vent His Holy wrath on this sin by Achan.

Reading in **(Joshua 7.10-12)** *10 But the LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! Why are you lying on your face like this? 11 Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! **They** have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me. **And they have not only stolen them but have lied about it** and hidden the things among their own belongings. 12 That is why the Israelites are running from their enemies in defeat. For now Israel itself has been set apart for destruction. I will not remain with you any longer unless you destroy the things among you that were set apart for destruction.*

Note that the Lord used the word “they” in **They have stolen.** This indicates or shows others beside Achan were involved. This may be others in his family, or friends. But the LORD chose only Achan's family when in **(Joshua 7.14)** we read:... *That clan will then come forward, and the LORD will point out the guilty family. Finally, each member of the guilty family must come forward one by one.*

THE WAGES OF SIN – STILL DEATH

On this side of Jesus' Sacrificial Death to wash away our sins, we may forget the severity of sin to our Holy God. **God cannot bare to look at sin!** So when Jesus became sin for us, for the first time in eternity past, God looked away from His Beloved Son! I believe we can say that this pained Jesus more than all the physical abuse He endured on the Cross.

Now **about** 1,100 years before Jesus' Cross, God expressed His anger through His prophet Samuel to King Saul. Saul, the first King of Israel, simply refused to obey God's clear instructions against the Amalekites. **God had commanded him to destroy everything and everyone.** King Saul disobeyed God; almost obeying is not obeying! He replaced God's command by his own judgment, and also, he decided that not killing the best sheep would be an animal sacrifice pleasing to the Lord. **Not so!** As Samuel the prophet speaks to the King in **(1 Samuel 15. 20-23)** *“But I did obey the LORD,” Saul insisted. “I carried out the mission he gave me. I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else. 21 Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep, goats, cattle, and plunder to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.” 22 But Samuel replied, “What is more pleasing to the LORD:*

your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.

God revealed His fierce anger at Saul's disobedience in terms of a sin known to well in Israel.

Witchcraft! {NOTE for today: Dear OIC Church beware of the evil in the movie *Wicked*.

This movie calls evil good! There are no good witches!} Samuel further chastises King Saul in (1Samuel 15.23/AMPC): *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim (household good luck images). Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.*

Similar to King Saul, Achan let lust for worldly desires lead him to rebel and disobey God. Take note of possible mercy for Achan for a quick confession! For the Lord said in (Joshua 7.11)

11 Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me. And they have not only stolen them but have lied about it and hidden the things among their own belongings. Both Achan and King Saul put wealth by material possessions over loyalty to, and, **relationship with God.** But Achan tried to “hide his sin” from God! But both Achan and King Saul treated God as if He were dumb and weak and not the *only wise God.* God can see everything, all the time. He could see the stolen goods hidden underground by Achan. He could see the sheep and goats and the King of the Amalakites alive in Israel's camp! For the Bible says of God in (2 Chronicles 16.9/NAS1995) *For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.* His eyes also find sin in the hearts of men, especially His Leaders. The sin of rebellion cost Achan his life and King Saul his position as king.

As you hear of God's wrath, dear OIC Christians, you may sometimes feel anxious. I do also when I preach it. There is a certain anxious feeling that you also might rebel and sin against God. If you feel this, you are in a **good place! Yes!** This kind of anxious thought is based on a humble knowledge of our sinful nature. It is not a fear leading to despair. Your fear will fade as you focus on the phrase in (2 Chronicles 16.9/NAS1995), *whose heart is completely His.* **If we gave our heart to Jesus, and don't willfully pull it away from Him, He will keep our heart for Him like a warm fire on a cold winter's night. As we remember God's Love and His choosing us, we can trust His Spirit, our Helper, to keep our hearts true. Our job is to simply keep a prayer line open to the Father and the Son.**

We read in **(Joshua 7.12)** *That is why the Israelites are running from their enemies in defeat. For now Israel itself has been set apart for destruction. I will not remain with you any longer unless you destroy the things among you that were set apart for destruction.* Now God is giving them an action to save Israel from destruction, destroy the things and sinners now set apart for destruction. **We Chsristians have difficulty understanding the destruction of all of Israel because of one man's sin.** My next “excursion” in the Bible is to answer a dear OIC Saint!!! She asked me why all Israel was punished for one man, Achan's, sin. God bless her for **desiring the TRUTH in God's WORD.**

We must realize that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had very *personal relationship* with the leaders, Abraham and his sons, and later in time, Moses and Joshua. Then through the entire Older Testament with prophets and leaders of Israel. The Bible does not indicate or show that kind of personal relationship being experienced by most Israelites, even the faithful. But under Moses, all the Isrealites saw and experienced Gods power to save them from slavery in Egypt. And, Israel that crossed the Jordan saw such power with their eyes under Joshua. They had no excuse!!!

But, we can be sure God never forgot to reward the faithfulness of any Israelite on earth and in Heaven. God's romantic relationship was focused on *His Lover; the Nation of Israel.* Therefore blessings and Judgments were to the society as a group. Yet still, for example, we see personal action in the Judgment upon Israel for unbelief by the twelve spies sent by Moses. This was as Israel first approached Canaan, their Promised Land, after leaving Egypt.

GIANTS OF FEAR

The Bible tells us in **(Numbers 13.27-28)** *This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. 28 But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw **giants** there, the descendants of Anak!* Now note that these Israelite spies only saw the power of men, quickly forgetting the power of the LORD who delivered them from the powerful Egyptians. God even drowned an entire army in the Red Sea to protect Israel. But a few Israelites remembered their God as in **(Numbers 13.30)** *But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. “Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!”* **BUT FEAR OF GIANTS , NOT FAITH, WON THE DAY AND PREVAILED!** **(Numbers 13.31-33)** *31 But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! **They are stronger than we are!**” 32 So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who*

goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. 33 We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!"

Next, the men of faith preached "have faith in God" to the whole nation. But the whole nation chose fear of GIANTS over faith. They put their faith in their strength as mere men, not in the LORD of Heaven and Earth. For the entire or whole Israelite Community chose to rebel against the Lord and His appointed leaders. The people said next in **(Numbers 14.1-2) : 1** *Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. 2* *Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they complained.*

God's righteous judgment sent the whole community to wander away from the Promised Land into the wilderness for forty years. During that time all would die except for those born in the wilderness and the three men who kept the faith: Moses, Caleb and Joshua.

Since Jesus' Blood Sacrifice as our Atonement a personal relationship with God is available to every Christian. *And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ* as it says in **(1 John 1.3)**. **We Christian have such a wonderful relationship with God. But, when we see GIANT TROUBLES IN OUR PATH....we too easily can forget His faithfulness to His precious Promises. We forget how Big and Omnipotent our God is! Why do we think that our strength has anything to do with God's Promised Victories!**

About 55AD the Apostle Paul warned the Christians in Corinth that they must beware of acting like the Israelites who rebelled against God. In **(1 Corinthians 10.1-5)** *I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. 2* *In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. 3* *All of them ate the same spiritual food, 4* *and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. 5* *Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.*

You might ask, Pastor Bruce, why did the Israelites act so sinfully? King Saul gave into lust for material wealth and prestige. Possibly also a sense of self-pride in showing mercy to King Agag had him disobey God. **But God has both then and now the right to demand judgment by Death.** So King Saul rebelled to disobey. If God had not pronounced judgment then mercy

pleased God. For in the Older Testament God's prophet Micah said in **(Micah 6.8)** *No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*

Achan also gave into a lust for beautiful things! Remember all Israel under Joshua saw the miracle of the Jordan River and the tumbling walls of Jericho. Also, Achan's leader under God gave God's Words of warning.

The problem for all sinful men, even us Christians, as with the Corinthians:

1. First, we forget that the devil tempts us to sin against our Holy God. We might think it is only our feelings. Feelings in themselves are not right or wrong! Many things feel good...but we may be deceived to satisfy a good feeling with a sinful action. Our feelings without close fellowship with Jesus may lead us to Satan's influence.

2. Second, after Paul exhorts or corrects the Corinthians he then gives them a **new Promise** against temptations as God's Word. In **(1 Corinthians 10. 11-13)** *11 These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. 12 If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. 13 The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.*

3. Third, the warning in **(1 Corinthians 10.12)** *If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.* This means either 1) standing in **your strength, not God's;** or 2) **standing in God's Strength: The Word & The Spirit** but forgetting that you are not in Heaven, yet! **Confidence is good.** But until war's trumpet is sounded no more, we must be ready to fight as soldiers of the Cross. The twelve spies under Moses led all of Israel into rebellion. They looked at their own strength against those Enemy GIANTS. They also forgot the strength of their God who had showed His love for them all.

4. Fourth, Men who seem “of the faith” often forget that God still loves them when He allows a *Mission Impossible* in their lives. Permit me to spend more time on this excursion from the Book of Joshua for what God means in Joshua and really the whole Bible....in His giving us JESUS!

There is a devotional in *Morning & Evening* by C.H. Spurgeon based on

(Isaiah 41.14/KJ21): ... *I will help thee,*” saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Mr. Spurgeon knew how we Christians too often doubt God's commitment to Love and to help us. So Spurgeon puts words into Jesus' mouth which are true in the Spirit. As if Jesus were speaking:

*“...What, not help Thee. Why I bought thee with My blood. What? Not help thee? I have died for Thee; and if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? **HELP thee!** It is the least thing I will ever do for thee. I laid aside My Glory and became a Man for thee; I gave up My life for thee; and if I did all this, I will surely help thee now.”*

Men of Faith, in the past ..now.. or ever, who rebel with sin against our God, the God who is Love, miss the point of this devotional “sermon!” by Spurgeon. This expresses the whole heart of God's Love. It was perfectly displayed in His sending His Son. Spurgeon's words as if in Jesus' mouth are true. **How can we forget that God so Loved Us that He gave His only Son. Jesus willingly gave up everything for us. He is always ready to Help Christians. What He already did is much greater than our current need. Simply remembering that God loves us is a powerful protection from our sinning against Him!**

Now, back to the judgment of Achan in the Book of Joshua.

SIN MUST BE REMOVED FOR UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD – THEN AND NOW

13 *“Get up! Command the people to purify themselves in preparation for tomorrow. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Hidden among you, O Israel, are things set apart for the LORD. You will never defeat your enemies until you remove these things from among you.* What Jesus did on the Cross, remove sin not just forgive it, for all Believers. The removal of sin had to be done by Joshua in commanding God's Judgment of Death to Achan for his sin. We assume that when the head of an Israelite's family is as corrupted as Achan by sin that the family is the same. Regardless, the Judge of the Earth so condemned his family too.

Jesus washed each of us sinners with His own blood. This made us *holy ones or saints* in God's Family. But sin by Christians in a local Church still limits God's power in that church family. We must be watchful in prayer not to give into the lust of the eyes as Achan did. We must also not simply give in to “little faith” in our powerful God.

About 90AD in **(1 John 2.15-17)** the Apostle John warned Christians: ***15 Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. 16 For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. 17 And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.*** We too need to listen and pray about this warning. Our modern societies are driven by computer images on electronic devices, especially cell phones. These images are meant to appeal to the “eye.” Of course, not all are sinful but we have been trained to pay close attention to these. This can be dangerous when our defense to sin may be lowered. God gives His children many pleasures that are not sinful, with many visual blessings.

SIN & THE CHURCH FAMILY

Now, remember the question of an OIC Saint: Why are all the soldiers condemned for one man's sin? And the question of why God's judgment of death to all of Achan's family members? I said that Jewish families obeyed the father very religiously, both in good and in evil. But, the best answer is found in the Newer Testament in the Apostle Paul's pastoral role to the Corinthian church. He had pioneered or planted this church years earlier. We find the Apostle Paul must condemn **Spiritual Pride** in the Church at Corinth. The Bible tells us of the danger of pride! This is not confidence but an arrogant attitude. Even worse is Church or Spiritual Pride. Reading **(1 Corinthians 5.1-2)** ***1 I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. 2 You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship.*** God's grace to sinning Christians stands out here. Unlike being stoned to death, the sinning Christians is humbled by ejection out of the Church. The punishment bore fruit as the Apostle urged his renewed membership after some time had passed. We see this in **(2 Corinthians 2.7)** ***Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement.***

The key point, which applied to God's dealing with sin in the Older Testament, is seen in **(1 Corinthians 5.6-8)** : ***6 Your boasting about this { sexual sin} is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old “yeast” by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. 8 So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth.*** Here Paul depends on his previous instructions

including some Jewish traditions for Passover. The message is clear. Unrepentant sin in the Family of God starts to corrupt other members of the church. This is not a Christian struggling against a sin of the flesh. It is being proud of sin, not struggling against it, thus perverting or twisting the favor or grace of God. Similarly before this Age of Grace with Achan and King Saul, *Get rid of the old “yeast” by removing this wicked person* meant death to Achan and banishment for Saul. I know of two **strong churches** in America that have been so split, and weakened, by allowing leaders to stay who believed homosexuality is not really **sin**!

I hope that my attempt to answer questions on these difficult events in Joshua has helped. Although God expects our accepting His Bible on faith, He wants us to grow in understanding what He meant by His actions. {Let me repeat this!}

ACHANS JUDGMENT

Reading **(Joshua 7.16-23)** *16 Early the next morning Joshua brought the tribes of Israel before the LORD, and the tribe of Judah was singled out. 17 Then the clans of Judah came forward, and the clan of Zerah was singled out. Then the families of Zerah came forward, and the family of Zimri was singled out. 18 Every member of Zimri's family was brought forward person by person, and Achan was singled out. 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, **give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth.** Make your confession and tell me what you have done. Don't hide it from me.” 20 Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. 21 Among the plunder I saw a beautiful robe from Babylon, 200 silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound. I wanted them so much that I took them. They are hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest.” 22 So Joshua sent some men to make a search. They ran to the tent and found the stolen goods hidden there, just as Achan had said, with the silver buried beneath the rest. 23 They took the things from the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites. Then they laid them on the ground in the presence of the LORD.*

(Joshua 7.24-25) finishes Achan's life on earth: *24 Then Joshua and all the Israelites took Achan, the silver, the robe, the bar of gold, his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, tent, and everything he had, and they brought them to the valley of Achor. 25 Then Joshua said to Achan, “Why have you brought trouble on us? The LORD will now bring trouble on you.” And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies.*

Did Achan or his family have an afterlife with God? We don't know. We might wonder if Achan and his family's eternal destiny changed by his confession after Joshua said in **(Joshua 7.19)** *“My son, **give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth.*** The Bible does not say.

But, Heaven seems possible in my understanding for one of God's Chosen people. The Bible did not make clear the extent of grace when one of the *chosen people* was executed by death for sin. I would lean toward a **YES**. God had to make an example and remove the *yeast from the Holy Bread of Israel, the Chosen People*. In the Newer Testament Paul wrote about getting rid of the *yeast of sin in the Church* to the Corinthians.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM FAILURES AGAINST GIANTS

First and foremost no one or nothing is as Big or Powerful as our God who loves us Christians. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Thessalonica in **(1 Thessalonians 5.9-11)** *9 For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. 10 Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.* We can encourage each other and remind all Christians that God loves them. He has the power and plan to cause all Jesus Followers to live with Him forever. This fact builds us up!

VICTORY OVER THE GIANTS

Do not let the size of the GIANT you face deceive you as the Isrealite spies did who Moses sent out. All the GIANTS are controlled from the spiritual world. The GIANT of lustful sin in Achan's and King Saul's hearts opened the door for throwing away life and honor. We have God's Promise against GIANTS of temptation in **(1 Corinthians 10.13)** *He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.*

God is Spirit and omnipotent. Don't depend on your own strength, but on God's. We read how God allows GIANTS in front of us to bring Glory to His Son and Himself. **They are not there to crush us!** Remember C.H. Spurgeons' message on **(Isaiah 41.14)** *..... I will help thee," saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.* Spurgeon's words as on Jesus' lips are true: *"...What, not help Thee. Why I bought thee with My blood. What? Not help thee? I have died for Thee; and if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? **HELP thee!** It is the least thing I will ever do for thee. I laid aside My Glory and became a Man for thee; I gave up My life for thee; and if I did all this, I will surely help thee now."*

Also remember that sin in our lives weakens us to overcome these GIANTS. Yes, God gives grace over our weaknesses. But He is continually changing us to win victories over sin as we become *perfect Sons of God*. As the Apostle Peter encouraged the Saints in **(1 Peter 1.5)** *And through*

your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. Yes, His plan and design looks into eternity when there will be no more GIANTS left to battle.

Let Us Pray,

REFERENCES

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