

On the Verge of a Victory

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 July 2013

Preacher: Jeff Martin

[0 : 00] Well, good morning to you. Pastor Don says, hey, it's your turn. I said, oh, okay.

I thought we had some more coming, but I'm ready to come up here. My name is Jeff Martin, and I'm one of the pastors at Open Bible Baptist Church, and I'm glad to be here this morning. I bring you greetings from Colorado Springs, Colorado, where Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and is sovereign over all, and he is alive and well, and we are doing our very best to proclaim his goodness, his grace, and his mercy in the community that we live, and we're glad to be able to be here and to be able to serve with all of you here this morning. Pastor Don has been really gracious. I'm glad to be here with him and with all of you and the leadership that's here. We enjoyed your team that came and ministered to us in Colorado Springs, and we're still benefiting from the service and your willingness to come and serve in our church and among the ministries that we have there in our church, and so we're grateful for that, and we're happy to be able to come back and to reciprocate at some level.

Hopefully, we can be as much of a blessing as you were to us here in this place, and so I'm glad to be here with you this morning. Pastor Don's very gracious. He said that, you know what, you only get about an hour and a half, hour and 45 minutes, and so I'm going to be real short for you, you're sitting here today.

I'm going to try to keep it under that hour and a half that's in there, amen? And so we don't know one another, so I just wanted to greet you and just to tell you a little bit about myself. We do things a little bit different there in terms of our worship.

Our team that was here with us this morning was giving me a hard time about a tie and suit, and they were like, hey, who are you, and why are you dressed that way, and how come you don't wear a suit for us?

[1 : 52] And so, you know, we're a real casual group. We have a little saying in our church. We say it's okay not to be okay. It's just not okay to stay that way, amen? And so I hope that we can just be casual with one another, and I know things might be a little bit different in here, but we're still preaching from the same Word of God, and God's Word never returns void, and so I love when I get a chance to preach in another place, and I don't really know the people as intimately as I know the folks at our church.

I like to look to the Word of God for a story, and it just communicates so really well, and I've learned from some other pastors that have come and have visited with us.

There's some ways that we can be able to communicate and kind of be able to know where each other's at when it comes to communicating God's Word, and so we're not a very quiet bunch.

There's a little feedback that happens in our church. It's in there. It might be a little bit different in this place, and so I'm going to—there you go, brother. We're there, and so amen. God is good, and so we have—I learned a little sayingness in there, kind of confirm that you've got what I've got, and we can move on to the next point, and I learned this from a good friend of mine, a pastor there in—actually in Uganda, and Pastor Sonnyong Jackson is in there, and so we just say a little thing. We say, get it, got it, good.

So I say, get it, and if you got it, you say, got it, and then I say, good, and I move on. Otherwise, I'll stay there for about another 30, 40 minutes. Amen? So you might want to practice this, eh, all right? So get it? Good. All right.

[3 : 29] We're on the same spot to sit in there. They didn't take you long on that part right there. Amen? And Pastor Don told me, you know what? In your hour and 45 minutes or so, you know, practice the three Bs. Be brief, brother. Amen?

So I'm going to try to do just that thing, and I also want to say to the visitors that are here this morning, if something in the preaching offends you or it's really not what you're used to, you come back, amen, next week, and Pastor Don will be here, and you give him a try and say, I'm here, don't—I hope there's something said and done that would cause you to return today, but if not, you come back next Sunday. Amen? You do that part.

And for those of you who are normally here, if I say something that's offending you this morning, at any level, I want you to know I'm not talking to you. I'm talking to your neighbor. Amen?

And so you just—you just remember that part's in there. And so, you know, I wanted to just talk a little bit to us this morning about doing things God's way, about applying God's plan in our lives, and I hope that you have your Bibles with you this morning because, really, this is God's plan for our life. And a lot of times, the way we view God's Word is we tend to view it like a stick or a two-by-four, and we think that God is waiting around the corner when we step out of line to smack us with it, but, really, this is God's plan to live the very successful way that we could possibly live in our lives.

[4 : 54] The most fulfilling way that we can ever live in our lives is when we take God's plan and we put it into our lives no matter what, even at extreme levels. And when we do that, we're going to live a victorious life.

And so, this morning, I want to talk with you about God's plan and on your verge to a victory and how we can take God's Word and God's plan and it'll lead to a victorious life for us in our lives.

When we do things and when we live according to how we want to do things, life can come out to be a disaster. It cannot turn out the way that God intended it for it to turn out.

When we do things that, by the things of our culture or our society or the norms that are out there, by peer pressure, what everyone else has to say, Oprah, Dr. Phil, and everybody else that's out there, that's not the best plan for our life, amen?

And it can lead to disaster. But doing things God's way can lead us to a victory. And this morning, we're going to look at a little story in the Bible where the people of God had no king. It was a time in the lives of the Israelites where they had no king.

[6 : 03] They had no lordship in their lives. They had not made Jehovah the king of their lives, the lord of their lives, and we're following it. And it says a very interesting thing at the end of our story, and we'll get to that.

It says that during this time, everyone did as they saw fit in their own eyes. And so, that's what we're going to be looking at this morning. Will you pray with me? Father, we just thank you for the day, and we thank you for who you are.

For, Lord, there is nobody else like you. And God, I pray that you would take your word and that you would make it plain to us this morning, that you would etch it on our hearts and on our minds. God, that you would hide me behind the cross and that your word would not return void.

We thank you and we praise you, and we ask all these things in the name of your son, King Jesus, amen. How many of you have ever been to SeaWorld? This is the part where you're raising. All right, a good portion of folks have been to SeaWorld.

I've actually been there a few times. As a child, my parents took me to SeaWorld. We used to live in California, and then Freda and I, when we were married, we took our kids to SeaWorld.

[7 : 01] We actually took them out there in San Diego. And then we actually went with another friend and their family down to Florida through the Make-A-Wish Foundation that was in there to SeaWorld.

That young man wanted to see SeaWorld before he left this side of life. And of all of the theme parks that are out there, I really liked, I really enjoyed SeaWorld.

I love the interaction with all of the animals that are out there. But the star of SeaWorld is Shamu, the killer whale. And even if you haven't been to SeaWorld, you probably have heard of or you've seen a picture of Shamu, the killer whale.

So I got some pictures of Shamu when we went. You can throw that up there. Yeah. So this is Shamu, the killer whale. That's my son, Jeffrey, petting one of the dolphins that's in there.

It's my wife, Freda, that's in there petting one of the dolphins that's in there as well. And Jeffrey actually sat in the splash zone where Shamu kind of makes this big splash when he comes out of the water and you get all wet.

[8 : 00] Go to that next slide that's right there. There you go. You can see where he just flips up his tail and you just get soaking wet that's in there. And he does all of these tricks and he jumps through all of these hoops and he gets a couple of dead fish from his trainers for doing all of these

tricks that's in there.

And if you would notice that's in there kind of on those two pictures there, it's to my left. It's probably to your right. I'm not really sure where the mirror image is at there for you on the picture screen that's in there.

But you'll notice that there's kind of a curve in his dorsal fin that's in there. It's a little curve. It kind of limps over to one side. And this is the condition that captured whales get.

And there's some argument as to why they get this condition. But most agree it's from spending too much time out of the water and from swimming in circles in the tanks that they're put in. And it's really incredible to see this majestic creature really up close and personal.

But it's not the way that God intended for him to exist. And I want you to go to this next slide that's in here. Now this is a couple pictures of a natural killer whale in the wild. Amen.

[9 : 03] And they travel in these pods of up to 35. And they're very social creatures that's there. They live in the open waters out in the ocean. They have no natural predators. I mean nothing thinks about messing with a healthy killer whale.

They're at the top of the food chain. And they hunt seals even. You notice that this killer whale at the bottom of the frame that's in there, he's actually up on the shore. He's actually launched his body out onto the shore that's in there to go over there and to get this killer whale.

The majestic creatures, amazing things that they can do. Just put that down as a note for those of you who like to take long moonlight walks on the beach. You know, amen. I'm just saying, right? So you might want to take a note for that thing. So when you—it just reminds me of this thing, of what things look like when man is in charge and when God is in charge.

When we live our life according to men or when we live our lives according to God. And you know, when the killer whale is captured by the ways of men, and it's trained to do things man's way and to jump through all of the hoops and to jump through and do all of these tricks and to perform to the standards of men, his life becomes very different.

[10 : 12] And yes, I'm really sure that SeaWorld does a really good job of taking care of Shamu and the rest of the animals. And they probably get really good medical care, probably better medical care than I've got. And there's this veterinarian team that's watching very closely to what they eat.

And they're fed this very regimented diet that's supposed to be good for them. And they give them some toys to play with to keep them occupied, I'm sure. But it's not the same thing as being out there in the open, in the ocean, being free, living the way that God designed them to live.

I think that same thing is true of us in our lives. When we choose to do things God's way or when we choose to do things man's way. And yes, we can conform to the norm of our culture and we can survive.

We can have the things necessary to get through life. But it's not the same thing as soaring through life the way that God intended for us to soar. So today we're going to look at this really weird book in the Bible.

It's this really kind of crazy story that's there. And we're going to see kind of this macro view, if you will, of this story that really kind of hits home. That victorious life, ultimately, it's about doing things.

[11 : 21] Doing things God's way, no matter what. No matter what. And we can conform to this world that we live in and to this culture. But we will not experience the victorious life that God intended for us to live.

And so for many of us, when we choose to live this other life, according to this culture and to this world, it's going to have disastrous results. And so go to that next slide for me. And this, it's a juicy story and has this kind of difficulty.

It's really kind of difficult for us to digest. So I'm just going to tell you up front. I'm going to give you this kind of disclaimer. It has some really tough issues for us to talk about and for us to think about. And, you know, a lot of people, they look over there and they say the Bible is this man-made book that's out there.

It's written by men. But listen, but if I was writing the Bible, I would never have put this story in the Bible. Amen? I mean, this is one of those stories.

If I was writing the Bible, if I was looking at the history of my people and how I carved them out by my name and set them apart to do my work, to do my will, and I wanted to communicate to the rest of the world, I'd be like, Ixnay on this one.

[12 : 28] Take this one out. Because it's just one of those crazy stories. I would have left this one. This is the type of story that's, and it's one of the reasons that I trust in the authenticity of the Bible as God's holy word.

Because God doesn't leave anything out. And this is just a tough and a weird story. It's in the book of Judges. And if you have your Bibles, I want you to open them up to the book of Judges. We're going to begin in chapter number 19.

And this story kind of spans through chapter number 19 and through chapter number 20. And I'm just going to kind of hone in on some key verses because it would take me too long to read these chapters to you. It would take me longer than my hour and a half.

Got it. There you go. But I want you to read them on your own when you get a chance. You go home and you read chapters 19 and 20 and you get a sense of this whole story that's in there.

And like I said, it's this really weird story in the book of the Bible. It's one of those stories when you first read it, you go, God, why did you put this in here type of stories? It can be one that can confuse us. It's one that's kind of hard for us to understand.

[13 : 30] And it involves this Levite who has a concubine. And in the Old Testament times, men had concubines as well as wives. Not because God wanted it that way, but because men are men.

And his concubine ran away and she went home and she went back to Bethlehem where she was at, where her father's house was at. And so she went to Bethlehem and he went to Bethlehem. He followed her to go and get her and to bring her back.

And he was bringing her back after he stayed a few nights at his father-in-law's house. He sweet-talked her into coming back with him that's in there. And on their way back to their hometown, they stopped in this little town called Gibeah.

And when he got to Gibeah, he stayed the night at this house of this guy from the town of Gibeah. And he met this guy in the town square. And as he was staying the night that was in there, there were some men of the tribe of Benjamin who came at night.

And they wanted to take advantage of this man, of this Levi. They wanted to take advantage of him sexually. And the man who owned the home he was staying in said, Don't commit this wickedness.

[14 : 36] Please take my daughter or this man's concubine instead. Horrific story. And I'm giving you kind of the thumbnail sketch, if you will, kind of part of the background.

As I just told you, you read about all that in Judges chapter number 19. And anyway, they ended up sending the Levite man's concubine out to these guys. And they ravished her all night.

And she came back in the morning. And it ended up killing the woman. She died. And because of this horrific event committed by one of the tribes of Israel, by the tribe of Benjamin, this Levite thought, This is horrible.

It overwhelms me. I have to let other people know about it. They need to be able to respond to this. So he thought to himself, This just can't be something that's just brushed under the rug.

I don't want to forget about it. I don't want anyone to forget about what has been done to this travesty that's occurred. And so it has to be known to others.

[15 : 38] And so he comes up with this plan, kind of a marketing idea, if you will, to get the word out. And so he actually divided the dead concubine's body into 12 pieces. And he sent a piece of the woman's body to each one of the tribes of Israel.

Now I know that some of you are thinking to yourself right now, Boy, that's a great inspirational story, Pastor. Glad you showed up from Colorado Springs to give us that. But I was reading this story in chapter 20, and there's some things that really caught my attention, but I wanted to kind of give you the background on it first so that you could view it in context.

Because of the grievous nature of this sin, of the tribe of Benjamin that had been committed from some of the men within the tribe of Benjamin, it contaminated the rest of the tribe.

And at the end of chapter number 19 and chapter 20, the rest of the tribes of Israel, they respond to this horrific crime that's occurred. And it's very interesting to me the way that they respond.

And so I think this morning we can glean some lessons from looking at God's plan in this response. Look with me in chapter number 19, verse number 29. I'm reading from the NIV, if you will.

[16 : 49] Hopefully we have it up on the screen there. Perfect for me. It says, And the first thing I think that we can take away from this story is that even God's people sin.

But when they stay in sin, it leads to crazy living. It leads to crazy living. And at the end of this book, like I said earlier, when we first started our conversation this morning, it tells us that in those days

Israel had no king.

Everyone did as he saw fit in his or her own eyes. And these men who committed this act, they weren't from some pagan nation. This crime was being done by some of the men of the tribe of Benjamin who were part of Israel, part of God's chosen people, part of the elect, part of the children of God.

And you know, so many times I think we can lose sight of the fact that sin is a common problem to all of mankind. And it can come from anywhere. Listen, it's not God's desire for us to live a life of sin.

Listen, because it's written in the Bible doesn't mean that it's permissible by God. It's not God's desire for us to live a life of sin, but he's given us freedom to choose how we're going to behave and how we're going to respond to his word or how we're not going to respond to his word.

[18:28] And God in his infinite wisdom has decided to allow us this kind of freedom. And the problem is many times we choose poorly. And we really don't think that, you know, our little sin really kind of has a big impact on others in the whole scheme of things, you know.

And I think some of us in the rest of the world, we rightly expect Christians to be different, as we should be. We're called to be salt and light to the rest of the world. But when one among us sins, it should not cut us off guard.

It shouldn't set us back. It shouldn't disillusion us. And I think that many times when one of us sins in a way that we find to be a particularly grievous sin, especially when it happens to us, when they've sinned against us, we begin to question God and question the church.

And sometimes this leads many people down the wrong path. And instead of dealing with the sin and saying that this was wrong, that this person needs to repent, they need to turn away from the sin and go a different direction, they begin to wonder, why would God allow this to happen?

They wonder and they reason to themselves, if this person was a believer, if this person was a Christian, then I don't want to have anything to do with what or who they believe in. We wrongly look at the wrong example.

[19:55] Our example is Christ. The one who sets us free from sin, but we're focused in on the sinner. And so they begin to drift away from their relationship with God and with the church.

I can speak to this from personal experience. See, I was involved in church and the people of God, the ecclesia, the called out ones, had great relationship with God, but nobody taught me that my focus should have been on Christ and I was looking around at all the people and they made some mistakes and it grievously offended me.

And I ran as far away from the church as I possibly could run. And if we're going to follow God's plan, we need to acknowledge that God is God and that He has ordained free choice for all of mankind, that men and women of all persuasions, they're going to sin.

And when they do, it's not the will of God. And we should not allow it to affect our relationship with Him and with other believers. It's not part of God's plan. It's not part of His design.

We need to stay focused on Christ and who He is. Well, sin had been committed by the tribe of Benjamin and it was a sin that could not be overlooked because it was a grievous sin.

[21:15] It was horrible. And it affected the whole nation. And I say, I think the second thing that we can see from this story is that there may be something in our lives that we need to deal with before God can move forward with the plan in our lives.

And sin has this crazy impact. So we need to deal with it individually and we need to deal with it as a community. We need to deal with sin in our lives individually and we need to deal with it as a community.

And sometimes I think we have this very casual view of sin in today's day and age. You guys are kind of in a really conservative state here in Oklahoma. I can't say the same thing is happening in Colorado.

You've seen the news. You've seen that we voted in to legalize marijuana. We voted in civil unions. And we're on a fast and slippery slope.

And I think that we have this casual approach to sin in our lives. And we have this casual approach to dealing with sin. We might believe that we have some things in our lives to deal with, but really, it's really not that big of a deal in the whole scheme of things.

[22:29] After all, everyone's doing it. And there's, you know, there's those guys. You know those guys, right? Their sin, right?

It's much worse than mine. God wants us to be honest today and to realize and to acknowledge to Him that our sin is just as grievous as to God as the story that I just told you about the men of Benjamin and how they committed this horrific act to this Levite's concubine.

When you heard that story, how did it make you feel? When we look at a story like that and we think that, man, that was a heinous crime, a disgusting sin.

And the way that that crime, the way that that sin twisted your stomach and grieved your soul is the same way that your little pet sin grieves the soul of God. He's holy.

He's righteous. He's just and cannot be in the presence of sin. We often don't want to see it that way. We've been sold kind of a bill of goods, at least in our part of the country, that Jesus is loving and Jesus is merciful and Jesus is forgiving of everything and He just pets little sheep.

[24 : 00] And Jesus is loving. And Jesus is merciful. And Jesus is forgiving. But Jesus is also holy and He's righteous and we sung about it and one day He's coming back again and the clouds will crack open and He will come back and He will rule as judge.

You can't just look at one facet of God that you think is the okay side of God and go, oh, it's okay. Once saved, always saved. I can just keep on sinning.

We often don't see it that way, do we? You get it? Some of you didn't get it. I'm going to stay on it. See, we like to characterize our sin and we say, I sinned, but that person committed a bigger sin. But the reality of it is, is that our sin is just as grievous to God as the rape and the murder of a concubine in ancient biblical times. And so sin is heinous in God's eyes because He's so good and so holy and so righteous.

And listen, you think about that sin and it turns your stomach because you think you're a pretty good person. I'm pretty good. You know, we're pretty good people around here. We would never do anything like that.

[25 : 14] Pretty good people don't behave that way. And so it twists us. But God is a million times more good than we are. So perfect that when we sin, this is what it looks like in the eyes of God.

My plea to you this morning is that if there's some sin in your life today, something that's grieving the Holy Spirit, the Bible says do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Today is the day to deal with it.

And then there's some really good lessons in how the children of Israel responded when we find them in chapter number 20. You got that last one? All right, now we're tracking.

So the other tribes of Israel, look, continue in the story. The other tribes of Israel, they get together and when they receive this package in the mail, if you will, they knew that there was this grievous sin that had been committed.

And they said in chapter number 19, verse number 30, it says, everyone who saw it says, such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt.

[26 : 17] That's how horrible and horrific it was that they, and then they said these three things. They said, think about it, consider it, tell us what to do. Think about it, consider it, tell us what to do.

This means that we should confer and evaluate and then speak up. You see, God doesn't want me to be silent about my sin. I always think it's funny when people don't want to confess their sins.

They say all kinds of excuse, things in excuse for confession. I mean, you hear, you know, that's a private matter. You know, that's between me and God. I don't really need to tell anyone else about it.

I don't need any accountability in my life. I'm going to move on. I don't need anyone to tell me about my little silent sin.

God tells us, confess our sins. Repent and turn away from it. 1 John 1, 9 says, if we're faithful to confess our sins, God himself is faithful to forgive us of our sins. We need to speak up and call a sin a sin.

[27 : 28] Too many that are standing in the pulpits today across the nation. I'm sure it's not happening in your things. I'm not talking to you. I'm talking to your neighbor. I'm sure it's not happening in your community. But across our nation, we see too many standing up in the pulpits and they're looking over and going, well, I don't want to say, because it's going to offend somebody.

We don't want to offend anyone in our workplace. We don't want to offend anyone in the schools. We don't want to offend our neighbors. We don't want to even offend the people who are sitting in the pews.

Think about it. Consider it. Tell us what to do. Speak the truth about where you are before the Lord. Stop fooling yourself. Because you're the only one that's being fooled in this whole process.

God is clear about it. Speak the truth of where you are before the Lord. Confess it. Don't just ignore it. You know, wink at it. You might be saying, yeah, but every time, you know, I confess, the next week, I end up doing it again.

Well, don't worry about next week. Tomorrow isn't promised to anyone. You might be in heaven today. You might, Pastor, Pastor Don prayed for us this morning. You might be in heaven next week. The Bible says, even a righteous man falls, but, seven times.

[28 : 48] But today, today, if God puts his finger on something in your life, we might think that it's, it's minor because, you know, everyone's doing it.

but he's holy and he's just and he's righteous and it's just as grievous as the rape and the murder of a concubine.

If God puts his finger on it in your life, if he shows you something in your life, if he convicts you of something in your life, then you need to think about it and consider it and speak up and ask him to tell you what to do.

Say, Father, I've sinned. God, I don't know why I did this thing. I don't want to do this thing, but I'm doing this thing anyway. God, help me from this. God, forgive me from it. God, help me to turn away from, send someone on my life who can help me.

Holy Spirit, speak to me. Not talking to you. Talking to your neighbor, right? You didn't get that? Okay.

[29 : 49] And then when we do that in our own lives, we need to begin to do it for our communities and for our nation. We see what's happening across our nation right now. Talking to Pastor Don about it earlier this year today.

Our area of Colorado, El Paso County, is one of the largest conservative areas in the entire state. El Paso County is the largest county in the state. Yet when the marijuana bill came by, all the Christians stood up and said, no, we can't be for this.

We got behind the voting booth. We signed off. Who? It wasn't me. It wasn't you.

It must have been your neighbor. Comes to civil unions. It's Christians who are signing off on it. People who are proclaiming to be people of the book. We're the majority. But somehow, when it comes to the polling place, we keep coming up on the short end of the stick.

[30 : 51] Either we're not going and let our voice be heard, or when we get behind closed doors, we're really like, well, you know, I don't think I would mind having a little something myself. Nobody will know.

I want you to notice something as we go back to the story in Judges chapter 20. The tribe of Benjamin, as they also get notice of this act that was committed among them. Right?

This piece of this woman's body comes to them as well because they're one of the 12 tribes and they receive it. But for them, there is no conviction. They choose to live in spiritual denial.

Look at chapter 20. Look at verses number 12 through 14. It says this. So the tribes of Israel sent men throughout the tribe of Benjamin saying, what about this awful crime that was committed among you?

Now surrender the wicked men of Gibeah so that we may put them to death and purge the evil from Israel. But the Benjamites would not listen to their fellow Israelites. From their towns, they came together at Gibeah to fight against the Israelites.

[31 : 59] Basically, those verses say they would not call a sin a sin. They would not listen to their brothers and sisters in the Lord who says, let's get rid of this thing. Let's destroy this thing.

Let's put this thing to death. Let's put it to bed. Let's get it out of here. And they chose not to repent. And they chose not only to just passively ignore it, they chose to defend it.

They took the attitude of so many in our culture today. You know, don't ask, don't tell. That just doesn't work with God, does it?

And the Benjamites said, you know what? We're not going to do it. We're not going to do it. And you can't thank us. It reminds me of the people who refuse to obey the voice of the Lord, who refuse to call sin a sin.

It's always somebody else's fault. It's a husband you gave me, Lord. It's a wife you gave me. It's the way I was raised. I don't get paid enough, so I deserve to, you know, take a little bit something extra from my employer.

[33 : 11] Whatever the excuse. They don't try to just ignore it, but they try to defend their sin. And the remainder of the tribes of Israel who actually considered the sin of this certain Benjamite men,

they spoke up and they communicated this sin to their brothers in verses 12 and 14, but they wouldn't listen.

And so being rejected, what did they do? They conferred to the Lord. And they have to deal with this sin issue because of the wickedness of men's heart.

Listen, we take this casual approach to sin, but listen, sin is serious in God's eyes. Sin is serious in God's eyes. Look at what it says in verse number 18 of chapter 20.

It says, the Israelites went up to Bethel and inquired of the Lord. They said, who of us shall go first to fight against the Benjamites? And the Lord replied, Judah shall go first.

Judah first. And so they go to war. They gather their troops and they go to war against the tribe of Benjamin. In essence, in a metaphorical sense, it really represents the flesh.

[34 : 18] And this is a contingent that we have to deal with in our lives all the time. This contingent between the flesh and between the spirit. And Benjamin is representing the flesh and the rest of the tribes of Israel are representing the spirit of God.

And the Bible tells us that the flesh never agrees with the spirit. No matter how much evidence you bring to bear, the flesh just doesn't want to obey the will of God. Galatians 5, 17 tells us, for the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the spirit.

And the spirit, what is contrary to the sinful nature. They're in conflict with each other so that you do not do what you want to do. So Benjamin didn't want to do what God wanted the children of Israel to do.

They denied the fact that there was sin. They said, no, we're just going to do our own thing. You know, hey, don't judge us. Leave us alone. The Constitution protects me. Freedom of speech protects me.

Who are you to say what's right and what's wrong? It might be wrong for you, but it's okay for us to each his own. Don't judge us.

[35 : 22] Yet the word of God judges them. And so the other tribes had to speak up and the other tribes received their marching orders from God and they received his word and God said, Judah, go up first.

And so they got up and they went. And they rightfully received their marching orders from God. But here's what I want you to see. The outcome wasn't so great. The outcome was not what they had expected.

See, sometimes when we do what God has called us to do, we don't always get the outcome that we expect. Sometimes when we do what God has told us to do, what we know that God has instructed us to do, we don't always get the outcome that we expect.

Verse number 19 says, the next morning the Israelites got up. You know, they got their marching orders from God. Everything is good, right? So they're up. It's early in the morning. Like, hey, let's go. And they pitched their camp near Gibeah.

And the men of Israel went out to fight the Benjamites and they took up battle positions against them at Gibeah. And the Benjamites came out of Gibeah and cut down 22,000 Israelites on the battlefield that day.

[36 : 32] Wait a minute. Wait a minute. God, I thought you told us to go up and do this.

I think there's a great lesson for us here for we often wonder if we're doing the right thing when we see what we think are the wrong results. Have you ever been there? God ever told you to do something you know he told you to do?

God says, I want you to go in on Monday and I want you to be nice to that person there on your job who always curses you and hates you and I want you to be nice to them and I want you to let your light shine for them.

I want them to see the glory of me within your life. I want them to see the forgiving side go in there and smile and go in there and be salt and light for them to sit in there.

And we think, okay, okay, God, boy, I'm going to go do it. I'm going to be nice to them, God. I'm going to be nice because they're going to see the glory of God in my life and then they're going to fall down on the office floor and they're going to repent and cry out and say, what must I do to be saved?

[37 : 38] And what do they do? You go in and you do what God says and they laugh in your face and they curse you even more. God, it isn't working. Am I sure I heard God say, go up and do this?

Maybe it was the coffee. Maybe I had too much pizza late last night and it was just indigestion talking. Maybe it was just the motions of that day. Maybe it was something else. But God said, go. Did he not? So what did they do? The Bible says they encouraged themselves and they put their best face of faith on. They're sitting there. Here's what it looks like. You know, you put your best faith face on.

How you doing, brother? Praise the Lord. I'm doing great. I'm doing great. And you're dying inside. They have their faith face on. That's what they did. They put their best faith face on and they reformed their battle lines and then they even did it with tears and they went to God and they cried out to God again and we do the same thing sometimes.

Lord, this is evil. This is bad. You told me you wanted me to do something about it. You told me to go and I'm going. I'm preparing. I'm moving forward. I'm doing what you said to do. I'm going and now I'm defeated.

[38 : 49] Or it even happens with the evil and the sin in our own lives. Lord, I know you want me to do this. I know you want me to stop that. I know you want me to put that addiction down. Lord, I know you want me to deal with this anger issue in my life.

Lord, I know you want me to be the husband that you called me to be the wife that you called me to be. God, I know that you really want me to honor my mother and my father. I'm trying really hard. I moved out in faith. I did what you told me to do but I'm defeated.

What's going on, Lord? God, didn't you tell me to get up earlier and have quiet time? Didn't you tell me to read more? Didn't you tell me to serve in this ministry? And after all of this, I'm still struggling? And sometimes when we do what God has called us to do, we don't always get the outcome that we expect. And so the second time they go to God and look at verse number 22. It says, But the men of Israel encouraged one another and again took up their positions where they had stationed themselves the day before.

And the Israelites went up and wept before the Lord until evening. And they inquired of the Lord. They're doing everything right, right? They said, Shall we go up again to battle against the Benjamites, our brothers?

[39 : 56] The Lord answered, Go up against them. Are you sure, God? No, they didn't say that. Go to the next slide. Sorry. So then the Israelites drew near to Benjamin the second day.

And this time when the Benjamites came out from Gibeah to oppose them, they cut down another 18,000 Israelites, all of them armed with the swords. God, what's going on?

Can you imagine how discouraged they were? They're taking a stand against sin. They're doing what God told them to do. And this is the results.

And this story shows us that sometimes following God's instructions is it's a tough thing to do. It's a tough thing to do. It's not always going to be easy.

Listen, I believe that we're coming to a time of our nation where you're going to have to stand up for sin. We hopefully are going to be going on a tour of, I believe, an organization here based in your town called Voice of the Martyrs where there are people who are standing up for Christ and being persecuted in their countries.

[41 : 11] The time is coming where that will happen here. There's a time will come in my lifetime if Jesus doesn't return and I live to be several years older where I believe that I will face persecution, perhaps even criminal persecution by our own government for saying the things that I'm saying to you this morning.

And then that time comes I want you to know it's going to be tough. Teach your children. Write it down. Make it plain. Son, daughter, we're people of the book.

And God is telling us to do some things that are counterintuitive to our culture and it's continuing to change and one day you're going to have to stand for your faith. And you may be persecuted for it. You may be locked up for it but it might not seem like things are working out the way that we think they're supposed to work out but you hold on. You hold on.

You're on the verge of a victory. The story shows us that sometimes following God's instructions is a tough thing to do.

[42 : 27] That's not always going to be easy. It's not always going to be easy. Parents, don't give in. Train up your child in the way that they should go. You have them here in church today.

You're going to have them in vacation Bible school. Get them involved. Get them wrapped up. The Bible says that if you train them up that way they won't depart far from it. They won't.

Hang on. They might depart but hang on. You're still on the verge of a victory. It looks like they've departed. It looks like they've gone their own way but hang on. You're on the verge of a victory. They're writing their own testimony.

Hang on. The Bible says don't give up. Just because everything isn't going your way don't give up. Expect some things to be difficult. You're not the only one going through tough stuff. And after two very difficult and painstaking attempts I'm sure there were those who wanted to give up.

[43 : 24] Those who wanted to turn back. Those who thought to themselves it's not worth it. And after two attempts the line is drawn in the sand and we have to decide which side of it we're going to be on in this thing.

The side that says I'll be obedient to my Lord my Savior my God no matter what. Or the side that says I'll turn away when things get hard. And after two attempts there comes a difference between those who are simply observers spiritually and those who are obedient spiritually.

There are some people who come to our churches today I know you don't have them here in Oklahoma but back in Colorado you know. And they just take notes and they watch and they observe.

They might even come to Bible study every once in a while. They're feeling frisky and they'll observe but they never get involved.

They don't roll up their sleeves. They don't want to get dirty. They don't want to do the hard work. They don't want to invest in the church. They want to receive but they don't want to contribute.

[44 : 36] They want to observe. And then there are those who are obedient no matter what. Even when things don't turn out the way they expect it. Pastor you had this plan for this church for this ministry to launch but it didn't turn out the way we thought it should.

I'm out of here. Because it's just a little too tough when things don't turn out the way you expect them to. I tried to talk to my husband nicely the second time and he's still a jerk.

God you told me to love him I'm trying but he's not changing. Of course God is not so interested in changing that other person that you're focused on as he is in changing you through obedience.

You thought it was rough at the front part of the story huh? You got it? Alright. So this story it's getting a little rough now right? I mean you read this story I'm like man what's the deal dude?

Whew. I mean don't you think that to yourself?

You turn on the television where's the name it and claim it? Hmm? How come I just can't speak it into existence? I want a victory thank you I don't smoke it into existence. Where's the sneezing and prosperity comes?

[45 : 59] And so I'm going to sow and I'm going to get some huge benefits. You know the one they don't have them here in Oklahoma I know but in Colorado you know the one send me \$250 right now and I have this cloth and I'm going to send it to you and you're going to reap and you're going to sow 100,000 times more.

Hmm? Where's the speaking it into existence in all of this? Where's the easy faith at? It ain't here. They've gone up a second time and they've met with disastrous results.

18,000 more on the top of the 20 something thousand previous times of their brothers of their husbands of their sons have met their death.

This isn't milk. This isn't for the immature. This is meat for our souls. Because it is in such times as these that we are reminded that God desires obedience rather than sacrifice.

And we say things like you know I'll sacrifice I'll leave the marriage. the kids really don't need to grow up in all of this arguing that's going on.

[47 : 19] I'll leave so you can be happy. God hates divorce. I'll drop out of this ministry you know because it just seems like I'm in the way.

I'll move out of the way so the church can move forward. I'll leave the church because it doesn't seem to be working the way I thought it should work. We tend to play that game.

I'm not talking to you I'm talking to your neighbor. And I've done it before. I'm sacrificing God. God doesn't want your sacrifice.

God says I want your obedience. It's like times like this. When we've tried it twice and the results don't reflect what God told us. We think the way they should turn out and we know that God has told us to do something.

We know that we're in God's will but yet the results still don't reflect it. We need to hold fast and continue to be obedient. It's in times like this that we realize that as it has been said before that God

has not called us to be successful as men count success but to be obedient in our life.

[48 : 35] Stop measuring up your life to the measurements of men and women and measure it up to the standard of God's word. There are going to be times where you're going to want to quit. When you want to quit being in your marriage that seems like a disaster.

You want to quit honoring your mother and your father because you don't understand them and they don't understand you. When you want to quit serving in ministry that God has called you to because it's taking so much time and it's so hard.

it doesn't look like the results that I thought it should have looked like. It's not all you know like flowers and lollipops. What happened?

There are going to be times when you want to quit that job that the Lord gave you because it's not as easy as you thought it should be. There are going to be times when it's emotionally draining for you to raise your children God's ways instead of the world's ways and you want to give in and give them that cell phone at eight years old.

What? How'd that happen? Because they're whining for it. They're supposed to whine for it and you're supposed to tell them no. There are going to be times when it's painful for you to love your neighbor.

[49 : 50] It's going to be times where it's painful for you. Look across the road. Look. It's going to be times for you where it's going to be painful to love the person you're sitting next to. even loving our other brothers and sisters in church when Christians don't behave like Christians.

There'll be times when you want to quit and you need to remember that God has not called you to be successful as men count success but be obedient to his word. We may not feel successful but the real question is did God call you to the task?

Did God call you to the task? Did God bring you together as husband and wife? Did God himself call you into that ministry? Did God open the door for you to have that job?

Did God really know what he was doing when he gave you those parents to honor? After all he did know you before you were formed in your mother's womb. He does know the number of hairs on your head but he didn't know that you were going to be married to this person and it was going to be tough.

Did God really say honor him with our tithes and our offerings? Get it? Oh I need to stay here a little while longer. Did God tell us not to live as closed fist people but to be generous with the things that he's given to us?

[51 : 08] Did God tell us to be stewards over the things that he's placed us over in charge of on this earth that's in here? That we're just managers of it? It doesn't belong to you? Yeah you know your talents and your gifts is not what gave you that job it's the talents and the gifts that God gave you to give you that job to be stewards over that money and over that house and over that job and over that car so stop being stingy give someone a ride to church.

Did God really say that? You get it? All right. Did he call you to this church? Did he put you in this community of Bartlesville?

Did he say I want you to be my witnesses in Jerusalem? Samaria and Judea and to the ends of the earth? Did God really say he wants you to personally witness to your friends and to your family members to your co-workers?

Did he really call you to that task? Hey I thought that's why we hired the hired gun. That's the pastor's job. Ephesians 4 12 write it down.

Y'all read that later on. Bible's called the pastors to do what? To train the people. To teach the people. To disciple the people to do the works of ministry.

[52 : 32] Who's supposed to do the works of ministry? The people. Oh you got it. The people. Pastor's job is to train the folks. Did God call you to that task of inviting someone to church?

Whatever the situation. Did he call you to the task? If he did then no matter what the results by earthly standards press on. Press on my brother.

Press on my sister. Press on. It might look like it's disastrous right now but you hold fast. You press on. Why? Because you're on the verge of a victory.

You believe that today? You're on the verge of a victory and that's the whole point. Listen to this.

The third time they went and they inquired of the Lord. They conferred of the Lord and they considered what the Lord had to say.

And I love their response to their defeat. See when in doubt you're supposed to go into your secret place and seek out the presence of the Lord and they said you know what I don't know Lord. It's just not working out.

[53 : 31] I did what you said to do and there doesn't seem to be anything changing Lord. Are you sure you called me? No that's not what they did. They went to the Lord. They didn't go around gossiping and complaining. They didn't seek counsel of other men.

They didn't look to Oprah Winfrey or Dr. Phil some popular book that's out there. They went to get a word from the Lord and they sought out the Lord as should we. Don't go grumble to everyone else. Go and spend some time in your secret place on your knees. Because Jesus says in Matthew 6, my father who sees you what is done in secret will reward you openly and he'll reward you. For those who seek God must believe that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. And so as you allow God to be God in your life and you seek him God is going to give you reward. You're on the verge of a victory. See once again God confirms that they're headed in the right direction. Don't you hate when God does that? Amen? You were hoping that God would change his mind weren't you?

[54 : 26] Say Lord you sure you want me to be on this job? Yes. Lord are you sure we're on the right path? Yes. Lord but it's tough. Yep sure is. Verse 26 says this. Then the Israelites all the people went up to Bethel and there they sat weeping before the Lord.

They fasted that day until evening. I'd be doing some fasting around there too wouldn't you? Gone up twice before you've lost thousands of men in defeat. Things don't look good. I think somebody would do some fasting too.

And it says they they presented him with burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the Lord. They fasted and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings and car offerings and house offerings and they're like man I'm like whatever it takes Lord we need to hear from you.

We need something here. But they says that but they made a burnt offering peace offering before the Lord in verse number 27 says and the Israelites inquired of the Lord. In those days the ark of the covenant of God was there with Phineas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron ministering before it.

Remember Phineas was this guy back in Numbers chapter number 25 and he took this lance and he actually stabbed to death an Israelite man who was copulating with a Moabite woman so that the plague against the children of Israel might end there.

[55 : 33] So Phineas is right there this guy who stood for truth and they're standing before the ark of the Lord as the high priest in that day and they asked him shall we go up again to battle with Benjamin our brother or not?

And the Lord responds go but he adds something this time for tomorrow I will give them into your hands. Now notice two things. One we need to understand that following God's plan to victory requires faith. It requires faith.

It requires that you go up. And what strikes me is that Phineas isn't demanding an explanation from God. He's just looking for direction. And you know you see sometimes we won't follow God until God gives me an explanation.

Sometimes you know believers we sit in church and we pout for years waiting for God to give us an explanation. We dare not trust God because God somehow owes them an explanation. And they're stagnant and they're bitter and they're defeated saints.

Listen if God is God of the entire universe if he knows the end from the beginning he doesn't owe you or me an explanation. He doesn't owe us an explanation. We owe him obedience.

[56 : 35] It takes faith because he doesn't say Lord can you kind of explain to me what's going on here. He's looking for direction. He says Lord shall we go up again. He's looking for direction. See there's a difference.

And many times we're getting we aren't getting any word from the Lord because we're looking for an explanation instead of direction. And he gets direction. God is clear. God's not unclear about his word.

And God says go up. And here's the second thing that we need to understand. Victory requires faith but victory comes in God's time rather than ours. God comes in God's time not ours.

And they've gone up two times before the Lord and there doesn't seem like there's any victory. And then here he is this third time and he goes up and God says this is the time that I'm going to deliver

them into your hands. And we think well you know come on God.

You could have did that two times ago. But God chose this time. And he has a purpose in it. And I think there's a great lesson for us as we move forward and we grow in the life as followers of Christ. [57 : 37] There can be a tendency to say you know I think well this thing didn't work and that thing didn't work and there must be sin in the camp and I must not be doing something right or maybe I should I don't have the right skills for this or maybe somebody else should lead you know.

Not always. Not always. Sin in the camp is not always the reason for setbacks. In fact God uses as we'll see in our text here in just a moment setbacks to set up their victory.

Have you ever had any setbacks in your life church? Anybody in this room have any setbacks? You may have a setback in the future but God will use your setback to set up a victory and he does it for your good and for his glory.

Look at this and we're going to close. Look at verse number 29 of this chapter. It says then Israel set an ambush around Gibeah.

And drop down to verse number 33. It says all the men of Israel moved from their place and took up positions at Baltimore and the Israelite ambush charged out of its place on the west of Gibeah.

[58 : 36] Then 10,000 of Israel's finest men made a frontal attack on Gibeah. The fighting was so heavy that the Benjamites did not realize how near disaster was. The Lord, it doesn't say Israel, the Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel and on that day the Israelites struck down 25,100 Benjamites all armed with the sword.

God was defeating them. He was setting them up. What do I mean by that? Well God was allowing the tribe of Benjamin to become confident within themselves that he might set them up for defeat. See, every time that they won the battle before, they would go out against them and at some point that was in there they would say to themselves, you know what, now we're defeating them as we had defeated them before.

But what they didn't realize was that God was setting them up. See in verse number 32, it says when the Benjamites were saying we're defeating them as before, the Israelites were saying let's retreat and draw them away from the city roads.

God was drawing them into a trap and then in verse number 39 it says, and then the men of Israel would turn in battle. The Benjamites had begun to inflict casualties on the men of Israel, about 30, and they said we're defeating them as in the battle, as in the first battle.

And the great lesson for us is that a setback can lead to victory in our lives. And some of us are struggling financially. Some of us are struggling going through difficult times. Some of us are losing homes or cars or jobs and it's a setback.

[59 : 56] And you can think to yourself there's no reason to go on but it looks disastrous in my life. Or you can be obedient to the will of God and you can allow these setbacks to move towards a victory for you.

We don't need to be discouraged. God is setting you up for a victory and that's faith. See, God allows for mankind to grow confident like our flesh. And we grow confident in the things of man. We grow confident concerning the things of the flesh. And he allows some people to go and make all of this money like the psalmist in Psalm 73 said. He was wondering, why is the wicked prospering and the righteous forsaken?

I don't get all this, Lord. And what he didn't realize is that when he went into the temple of the Lord that God was setting them up for a great fall. And when you have God on your side, a setback is just setting you up.

He's not done with you yet. God allowed the Benjamites to become proud. Oh, we're just going to defeat them just like we had before. And in Proverbs 1.12 it says, pride comes before the fall.

[60 : 57] And so we should never kind of despair when we see our enemies prosper because God is setting us up for victory. Not for our own vengeance, but for his victory. For our victory.

God is doing a work and he's working to bring them down. Not just to bring them down out of a selfish gain for you, but to bring them to their knees so that they'll turn towards him.

So let me just say to you as I close this morning, continue to press forward in obedience to God.

God has you on the verge of a verge of a victory.

God has you on the verge of a victory here, Highland Park Baptist Church. This is your time. God's put you in this place. This is your year. Habakkuk says, look at the nations and watch and be utterly amazed for I'm going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if I told you so.

Do you believe that? Amen. God is going to use you as you reach out into your community. God is going to use you as you stand up and you stamp out personal sin in your life and sin in the life of your community.

[62 : 02] As you look over there and you call truth, truth. And you look over there and you see some setbacks. Things are going to look hard as you continue to be obedient with the work that God has called you to do here in this place.

God has got a victory lined up for you. Thank you.