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This Book... Shall Not Depart

#1205-A

Series: The Fruit of the Spirit

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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It was a moving experience...as moving as a commercial can be. Picture it in your mind. His name was John Smith (a catchy kind of name to say the least). Apparently, John had gone on a business trip to Italy and here he was standing in the lobby of The “Hotelio de Expensivo” in the heart of Rome trying to check in. He reached in his pocket, but lo, the worst had happened. Panic gripped him. His face seemed frozen with a look of fear. His billfold was gone.

He was 4,000 miles from home. He had no friends, no money, and no identification. The clerk behind the counter (who looked like a cross between Dean Martin and Count Dracula) offered absolutely no sympathy. John’s whole life went reeling before him. What could he do? Where could he turn? What would happen next? The suspense was building. The scene shifts. On screen is a pleasant looking woman, grinning from ear to ear, sweetly whispering into a telephone (strangely enough in perfect English): “Don’t worry, Mister Smith, we’ll take care of everything. Just let me speak to the man behind the counter, and we’ll have your money to you by morning.”

A look of relief sweeps over John’s face. He realizes he is safe at last. The music swells. The screen fades. And as big as life, the words boom out: “The Ajax America Credit Card... Don’t leave home without it.”

And of course, you wouldn’t. You couldn’t. Could you? Why, what would happen if you got to Rome, went to check into that hotel, and you had lost your wallet? You would probably rot to death in an Italian jail. So the moral to the story is that there are some things you never go around without. There are some things you just don’t treat as optional in that ongoing traumatic experience you and I have come to know as life on planet earth. You never leave home without them.

It would be humorous, if it were not so tragic. The things, you see, that we have come to determine are necessities, are not really the things that will keep us alive when the chips are down. Even with an Ajax America Credit Card a thousand things can happen to you that a piece of plastic won't rescue you from.

God knew that would happen, and so he determined that you and I needed a better alternative, some kind of specific road map that would serve to remind us what was and what wasn't essential to successfully travel on the freeway of the Christian life. He sensed that His chosen ones, the Jews, needed that warning as well. And so He lovingly gave it to us through them. It is found In the first chapter of the Book of Joshua.

The scene opens like this:

Moses, the man who has led the Israelites from the beginning, has just died, and the reality of it all was beginning to set in. God, it appeared, wanted to teach His people a series of great lessons, and He often uses even such things as the death of His saints to do so. One of those lessons is that no one is indispensable in His great scheme of things. No one. Even without Moses, God's answer to Superman, the work would go on. The reason was it wasn't Moses' work. It was God's, and God would always have His man. One of His great plans to accomplish that is called discipleship. It is a one-on-one pouring of a life into a life. Moses had done that. He had early on enlisted a young man named Joshua, the son of Nun, and taught him everything he knew. Joshua walked with Moses. He prayed with Moses. He fought alongside Moses. Then he fought while Moses remained in the trenches and prayed. So in tune with God's plan was he, that when Moses died, God just naturally handed the baton to the next runner in line, and the ministry went on.

God, you see, does not simply sponsor the short sprints in the Olympics. God also sponsors the relay races. He trains a man to train a man to train a man. That way, no matter what happens, God's man is always ready. In some cases, and for a variety of reasons, the replacement is able to be used in ways

even beyond the one who taught him. Such was the case here. So long as Moses was alive, God's plan was at a standstill. So now, verse one reads,

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying:

"Moses My servant is dead. Now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:1-5 NKJV)

I- THE LAND IS YOURS

Moses was dead. Now God was free to take the next generation with no one to depend upon but Himself. This new generation of Israelites would be handed the baton and given their marching orders. God's initial statement is so often overlooked. What He said was this: "This land is yours; but it is not yours because you will take it; you will take it because it is yours." God, you see, had already given them the land. Even as they walked, they walked on occupied territory. The issue wasn't whether or not they could take it for God; God had already delivered it to them. The issue was whether they would by faith enter into what was already theirs.

That is the first lesson given to us in this passage to reckon with. You and I possess all that is needed to live the Christian life. It has been given to us in the form of God's Spirit, who indwells us and enables us, and God's Word, which directs us. The issue is not whether we will have what it takes to live in victory. We have everything needed to live above the circumstances of life. The land of the Spirit is ours. We are

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heirs of God and “joint-heirs with Christ”. That does not mean that each of us owns a little of the inheritance; it means all of us are co-owners of all of the inheritance. So it is all ours for the taking. The issue isn’t whether God will give us all we need; the issue is whether we will take what He has given us. That is true of our salvation. That is true of a victorious walk.

The key is how we are to possess what we have already been given. Few of us doubt the theological truth of that principle. But few of us live as though it were a reality. Most of us believe that God has given us all we need to live triumphantly. Most of us will admit, as well, that we don’t. The void between what we believe and what we experience is what often leads to depression, discouragement, and disillusionment. It is also what leads powerful men to eventually fall and cause reproach to the name of of Christ.

So we begin a new series of lessons on taking the land that is ours. The first two weeks of the study we will look at the vehicle God has given us to take the land, to live triumphantly, to grow consistently. The next ten lessons will be the process of walking through the land one step at a time, experientially, by taking the nine-fold expressions of victory found in Galatians 5:22,23 and breathing them into our lives one at a time.

The title of the series is: “The Fruit of the Spirit.”

It will include an in-depth look at the nine manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit that are, in essence, the mind of Christ displayed through the life of the yielded Christian. The outline for this preparatory study is as follows:

- I- This Book Shall Not Depart
- II- The Land is Yours (Joshua:1-5)
- III- The Word is Yours (Joshua 1:6-8a)
- IV- The Choice is Yours (Joshua 1:8b-9)

So as our passage began, Joshua, the second man in the relay race, now had the baton, and the next move was up to him. All he needed to win the race had been given him by inheritance. His task was to choose whether winning the race was worth the discipline it took to accept the victory. “Every place the sole of your foot will tread upon, Joshua, is yours...

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provided you stay in the *confines of the land* I have given you.” Then God clearly defines the inheritance. It isn’t that Joshua could decide on his own what he wanted to take and go for it. God had outlined what was his, and what wasn’t. Not all the land in the world belonged to the Jews. But what was theirs, was theirs...if they would but accept the gift and enter in.

Not everything in this world is yours because you are a Christian, Beloved. Being a believer does not guarantee you good health. It does not guarantee you financial success. It does not guarantee you freedom from pressures and problems. It does guarantee you tribulation. And it does guarantee you an entire kingdom of spiritual treasures that will last forever, for moth and rust cannot corrupt them, and thieves cannot break through and steal them. If someone tells you that because you are a Christian, this world’s goods are yours for the taking, run the other way. They are promising you land that God did not promise you. He may choose to give it to you, but only if it will serve His Kingdom needs. The parameters were clearly defined for the Jew; and they are for us as well. Whatever is ours, we can claim; but to “claim in the Name of Jesus” what belongs to Satan is heresy, and it is dangerous.

II- THE WORD IS YOURS

That won’t happen to us if we are careful to claim the land in the manner prescribed by God. It is stated for us in verses 6-8 where it reads:

Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

(Joshua 1:6-8 NKJV)

Now our assignment for this coming week will be to meditate on that passage no less than ten times a day, no less than seven days a week. As we progress, you will see that this is a minimal assignment. But it won't be optional, as most assignments are. If you are to get anything at all out of this study, you must do no less than that. In order to accomplish that, we are going to have to tear that passage apart and look at the real meaning of each word, so we can be certain that we are meditating (or breathing, if you will) what God really said.

The first thing we are told to do is to “be strong and very courageous.” The word “strong” comes from a word which literally means to have the power to resist. The word “courage” means to be alert and secure in the knowledge that you possess power. So God has told Joshua to be aware of the power that God had given him, knowing that in that power, there is no enemy he cannot resist. Now the reason for this courage and strength is given in the same sentence. He is told that the power to stand and the courage that power brings comes from observing absolutes of Scripture, without exception. The word “observe”, then, means to guard or to keep something lest you be tempted not to heed it. So Joshua was not to flinch in the face of adversity, knowing that he had an arsenal of internal power that no enemy could resist. But though that power was unlimited power (that is, there is nothing it could not do), it was at the same time appropriated power (that is, it must be drawn upon properly or it was not available). So there was nothing Joshua could not stand against, provided that he never be disconnected from the power source. He would have to guard against that continually.

How sensitive was that connection? He could not turn to the right or to the left. There was no option on the itinerary for side trips. The highway to success was the Word of God, and it was a narrow, controlled-access road. One block to the right or one block to the left would be compromise alley and confusion boulevard. So long as Joshua stayed directly in line with the absolutes of the Word, however, there was nothing he could not do, because he was empowered by God, and that power gave him the courage to walk by faith where few men had ever been.

The ultimate objective of the passage was “prosperity”; but the word does not mean physical or financial security. The word “prosper” means to *accomplish satisfactorily what was intended*. In other words, when the wicked “prospered” in Jeremiah 12, it was because they had accomplished their perceived goals, which in their case was fame and fortune, or treasure and pleasure. But for the believer, *prosperity is the achieving of the will of God*. That may include passing through sickness, disappointment, deep grief, unanswered questions. But it will produce fruit that will remain in eternity. So the believer who wants to be prosperous, that is, who wants to achieve all that God had intended for him in eternity past, has no choice but to stay on course by keeping his guard up against anything that will hinder his obeying everything God says in His Word. That’s what it means to “observe to do according to all that is written in the Word”.

Now how are we to do this? It seems like “mission impossible”. It appears as though God is calling us to do what man cannot do. Man cannot keep the law; we know that. Yet man, indwelt by God, can progressively guard himself against all that would violate Scripture’s absolutes, and thus progressively mature into the likeness of Christ. Perfect? No. Continually growing? Yes, yes, yes.

What we will be studying these next ten lessons is how to tell if we are experiencing real spiritual growth, It is possible to tell. There are at least nine tests you can run that will send back a signal that tell you whether or not you are maturing in the faith. And they are not the tests we evangelicals normally use.

What we are lacking so far in the verse, then, is the *vehicle* by which we can stay on course and not swerve onto life’s detours. The question is, “How can we observe to do all that is written in the Word?” We may answer, “Stay in the Word.” That’s a good answer. It is true that sin will keep us from the Word, and the Word will keep us from sin; but we have seen many fail to progress and even fall into the depths of sin while teaching, preaching, studying, and expounding the Word of God. So “staying in the Word” must mean something different

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than what we normally understand it to mean. We know we are to read it, study it, and even memorize it, but even that will not meet the criteria we are about to find in the next verse. I believe that in verse eight of Joshua, chapter one, lies the hidden treasure of spiritual transformation that perhaps no more than one tenth of one percent of all who walk with Christ ever unearth. Let's read it again,

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8 NKJV)

The word depart means *to let escape; to send away; to turn loose*. The commandment is that under no conditions at any time is the Scripture to be allowed to escape from the tip of your tongue. It is to be at the forefront of your consciousness continually; there is to be no time ever when the Word is not dominating your thoughts. You say, "But wait a minute; that's not practical." Beloved, there is no one more practical than God. The one who painted the butterfly's wings, and yet designed the universe so that it constantly replenishes itself is the very essence of practicality. He never asks us to do anything that is not possible, practical, or profitable.

But how can you keep the Scripture on the tip of your tongue? God answers clearly. By meditating on it day and night. The word "meditate" comes from a word that literally means to "talk to one's self". It is a word used in various places in Scripture to describe low groanings or utterances of men or animals. It means to continually be rotating thoughts to the tip of your tongue, or the forefront of your conscious mind. It is the same word used of a cow chewing its cud. A constant recalling, chewing, digesting—recalling, rechewing, redigesting. Never stopping. Never pausing. Always, continually, speaking to oneself of only one thing...the Word of God. Thinking about anything else is not meditation. Talking to yourself about anything else is not meditation. Scriptural meditation is predicated on the fact that the only thing you are thinking about is the Word of God.

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You say, but how can I do my job at work? No problem. You pass your decisions at work through the Scriptures as a matter of course. As the writer of Proverbs so beautifully said, "It'll help you make the right decision every time." You say, but how can I pay attention to my children? No problem. Every thought you convey to your children needs to be passed through the grid of the Word of God. Your discipline, your instruction, your encouragement, your correction. You have one guideline to follow. The Word of God.

There are, however, some times when meditation is even more profitable, because the mind is more available. Psalms says this:

When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in
the night watches. (Psalm 63:6 NKJV)

My eyes are awake through the night watches, That I
may meditate on Your word. (Psalm 119:148 NKJV)

In other words, when we cannot sleep, there is a reason. God wants us to use those quiet hours to recall and recount and rediscover the miracles of His Word. Thus the Psalmist wrote,

Stand in awe and meditate within your heart on your
bed and be still. (Psalm 4:4 paraphrase)

Principle 1- We are to continually be chewing the Word of God all day long, all night long. That, of course, necessitates memorizing it. You simply can't recall something that isn't there. You can't drive to work thumbing through your Bible; you can't interrupt a client at work while you grab for a concordance to find a passage to meditate on. It must be laid up before it can be called up. But memorizing it is not enough. Memorizing gives you the fuel. But God is not calling us to be a storage tank. We store it up so we can use it.

Principle 2- We are to be especially chewing it at night when the distractions of the marketplace have faded and our minds are not competing with the sounds and sights of life.

The next principle is just as important. It is found all through Psalm 119, especially in these verses:

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Princes (leaders) also sit and speak against me, But Your servant meditates on Your statutes.

Your testimonies also are my delight And my counselors.

Let the proud be ashamed, For they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; But I will meditate on Your precepts.

(Psalm 119:23,24,78 NKJV)

Principle 3- There is another time when we simply must be meditating without stopping...whenever we are under attack. Whenever the enemy begins to assail you and circumstances begin to overwhelm you, intensify your meditation of the Scriptures. Of course, if you are being obedient, meditating day and night will be natural. If not, tribulation ought to sound an alarm bell that penetrates your heart of hearts and says, "Stop! Call up the Word and begin to chew on it without stopping. Nothing else will give us the courage to stand."

III- THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Those three principles are all we will look at in this lesson. But they are enough to begin to revolutionize how we think. For this next week, I am going to ask you to meditate on Joshua 1:6-9 all week long. Ten times a day is not really meditating, but it is a start. A hundred times a day would be better. But I am going to ask you to do the following:

1- Memorize the passage before you go to bed tonight. Take an hour this afternoon if need be, and if you can't find time, then don't go to bed until you do. If God wakes you up in the night, that'll be why.

2- Define all of the key words in the passage. We've helped you do that for this verse. A paraphrase might read like this:

Be strong (be aware of God's power in you) and very courageous (keep your guard up and do everything the Scripture says to do). Observe to do what is written (do not, defect or withdraw from the course assigned to you).

To do this, the Scripture must not depart out of your mouth; it must always be available (it must never escape from the tip of your tongue; you must memorize it). Then you must meditate on it (never stop talking to yourself in Scripture).

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Not during the daylight hours (as you work), and especially not during the nighttime hours (as you rest); it (the Scripture) must constantly be being reviewed and applied in your mind.

Do that and then...

...you will be prosperous (you will accomplish God's purposes for your life)

...you will have good success (you will have gained insight) and

...you will behave prudently (as one whose life is characterized by godliness).

You may want to do a study on your own and come up with your own definitions.

3- Begin to memorize and apply corresponding passages. Begin with Psalm 1:2,3 and proceed perhaps to Psalm 119:97. Use them in your quiet time or as verses for discussion in your family times together. Discuss them at dinner time. "Talk of them when you walk by the way."

4- Ask God as you meditate to point out areas of your life wherein you are swerving to the left or to the right. Ask Him to remind you of choices you are making that are causing you to lose your power spiritually because you are not observing to do what He commands (guarding your heart against disobedience). When God does that, get alone with Him and search the Scriptures for additional passages to meditate on that specifically apply to the sins God is calling to mind.

5- Whenever you find yourself under attack, be it simply on the battlefield of your mind or in the thick of the cannonfire of life's adverse circumstances, focus your attention immediately on the Word of God and begin to pass it through your mind, across your lips. Speak to yourself from the Scriptures. Let the testimonies of God become your delight. The word "delight" indicates that from which you derive pleasure. Let your heart delight in the promises of God. Roll them through your mind when Satan's fiery darts begin to fly.

In our next lesson, we will study how to use meditation

to personalize the promises of God, and we will begin to meditate together on a passage or two, so we can visualize how it is done. We will also, Lord willing, take that passage in Galatians 5, that will form the basis for our meditation these next few weeks and begin to look at it in context. We will look again at how to form a “thread” of verses together so that as we meditate, one passage will naturally lead to another which will lead to another, etc.

Our goal is transformation and the appropriation of wisdom. Wisdom takes place when knowledge (information) becomes understanding (personalization) and is then acted upon (application).

As evangelicals, we tend to have volumes of knowledge. Though we know less than we think we do, we know so much more than we use that we become puffed-up warehouses of Biblical information rather than Spirit-filled illustrations of lives that are flooded with the very nature of God. The world isn't looking for information. It is looking for men and women filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.

The world is looking for lives so filled and flooded with the very nature of God that in every conceivable situation, and especially when the torrents of testing begin to descend, those lives act and react as Jesus would. Constant, quiet, peaceful, joyful, gentle lives...in fact, lives so *different* that the world stands in awe and wants to know what made the difference in their lives?

Those are the characteristics of a man or woman who has been meditating on the Word. They become like trees...fruit-bearing trees. Trees who stand when the wind blows. Trees who never cease yielding fruit, the kind of fruit we've just mentioned from Galatians five.

How joyful are you? What measure of peace characterizes your life? Are you kinder than you used to be? More gentle? More self-controlled? So much so that the world about you marvels at the change? If not, no matter how spiritual you think you've become, you're not bearing the kind of fruit God intended you to bear.

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For the next few lessons we are going to work together to better understand those nine qualities, along with the specific aspects of God's nature that each represent; and I'm going to ask you to meditate day and night on everything the Scripture says about the fruit of the Spirit.

That is where we are seeking to go. Our goal is for God to make a commercial, if you will, of our lives. It ought to look something like this:

Here we are, on screen:

Cathy or Charley Christian. Into one of life's trials we walk. The sky is falling; our world is crumbling; and like that Italian clerk behind the desk, the world is watching. Suddenly, we remember. But we don't reach for the phone to call Ajax America for a new credit card. We reach into our hearts and we draw up the Word of God which has been carefully laid there in logical form, and we begin to chew on it, as we have done a thousand times before. Suddenly, the answer comes. "God Is: therefore we have nothing to fear." Peace settles in our hearts. Joy captivates our lives. Love floods our souls. A gentleness characterizes our response. God is in control. Willy and Wanda World look on in awe. For we are at rest.

And suddenly, a chorus of angelic host begins to sing.

The picture dissolves; and only nine words remain on the screen:

"The Word of God...Don't leave home without it."

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