

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

TOOLS FOR SURVIVAL

Looking at the book of James from this perspective has been a very rich and rewarding study. There were many things that the early church was facing that are detailed in the book of James. For example, it was obvious that persecution was existent in their lives (James 1:1-5). It was obvious that they were encountering daily temptations to be friends with the world (James 1:12-14; 4:4). It was obvious that some were failing in their "everyday" responsibilities (James 1:22,27; 2:14-20). In order that they might survive these storms, James write to equip them with "tools for survival." Each chapter contains at least one tool that would ensure their spiritual victory.

CHAPTER ONE—ENDURANCE

James begins his letter by addressing those who had been scattered. The reason for that scating is most likely found in Acts 8:1-4. There the Spirit reveals that because of the persecution against the church, many were scattered from Jerusalem into the other parts of the world. By the time that this letter reached them, the readers had faced actual, physical punishment for their faith.

Consequently, James begins his letter by encouraging them to endure the manifold trials of life (1:2-4). James promised that there would be a crown given to those who were able to endure these trials with their faith intact (1:12). Without such endurance they would fade and perish much like the flower of the field in the burning heat (1:10-11).

CHAPTER TWO—FAITH

In the latter portion of chapter two, James reminds these persecuted Christians about the need for personal, working faith. Faith requires that we deal with those around us without partiality (2:1-9). Faith requires that we humbly submit to the laws of God (2:10-11). Faith requires that we love one another enough to extend mercy where mercy is warranted (2:12-13). This mercy is illustrated by helping the needy with action rather than words (2:14-16). Faith requires action in all aspects of life. In fact, James reveals that true faith will always be expressed in action (17-26). In this text, James pulls an example from the Old Testament—that example is Abraham. Although Abraham was noted for the works that he did, James points out that those works were motivated by Abraham's unshakeable faith in Almighty God.

CHAPTER THREE—CONSISTENCY

There is nothing more discouraging to a Christian than to see another Christian not living a consistent life. James plainly points out that a fountain cannot produce both salt water and fresh water. Nor can a fig tree bear olives (3:11-12). In the same manner, the mouth of a Christian should not produce both blessings and cursing (3:10). A man living by heavenly wisdom with an intent on surviving the storms of life must live a life "without partiality and without hypocrisy" (3:17).

CHAPTER FOUR—UNITY

James begins this chapter by asking why they were fighting among themselves (4:1). The unity of God's people (especially during a time of uncertainty and persecution) was vital to their survival. Some had divided their allegiance between the world and the church (James 4:4) and, therefore, had actually aligned themselves with Satan (Luke 11:23). So James instructed his readers to resist Satan and draw near to God (4:7-8). In doing such, they would be united closer with one another.

CHAPTER FIVE—PRAYER

It is in this fifth chapter than an often quoted statement about prayer is found: "*The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*" (5:16). Prayer was going to be critical to their survival. The peace, strength, and courage to live through any and all trials would rest in their relationship and communication with God. A failure to

PRINCIPLES OF STEWARDSHIP

Text: _____

- I. Stewardship of _____ (Philippians 4:8)
 - A. _____ on the _____
 - B. _____ on the _____
 - C. _____ on the _____
 - D. _____ on the _____
 - E. _____ on the _____
 - F. _____ on the _____
- II. Stewardship of _____
 - A. _____ for _____
 - B. _____ for _____
- III. Stewardship of _____
 - A. _____ centered _____
 - B. _____ centered _____

HE IS ABLE TO DELIVER THEE

Text: _____

- I. Deliverance for _____
 - A. _____ to _____
 - B. _____ through _____
 - C. _____ without _____
- II. Deliverance from _____
 - A. Deliverance over the _____
 - B. Deliverance against _____
 - C. Deliverance postponed at _____
- III. Deliverance fulfilled in _____
 - A. _____ to _____
 - B. _____ in the _____

leave things in the hands of a loving and protective Father would have distorted their view of the situation. Therefore, they are urged through command and example to make the most of prayer.

May we study these matters and be more determined to use these inspire tools for survival!

-Wayne Jones

12 RULES TO RAISE DELINQUENT CHILDREN

The Houston, Texas police department has turned out a goodie in the form of a leaflet titles "Twelve Rules For Raising Delinquent Children." I'd like to share them with you. They are worthy of our consideration.

1. "Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living."
2. "When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he's cute. It will also encourage him to pick up 'gutter' phrase which will blow off the top of your head later."
3. "Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he is 21 and then let him decide for himself."
4. "Avoid use of the word 'wrong.' It may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is again him and he is being persecuted."
5. "Pick up everything he leaves lying around— books, shoes, clothes, Do everything for him so that he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility on others."
6. "Let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterile, but let his mind feast on garbage."
7. "Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later."
8. "Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?"
9. "Satisfy his every craving for food, drink, and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration."
10. "Take his part against neighbors, teachers, policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child."
11. "When he gets into real trouble, apologize for yourself by saying: 'I never could do a thing with him.'"
12. "Prepare for a life of grief. You'll be likely to have it."

-Randall Meldin

THE BOOK OF CONQUEST

The book of Joshua is one of the more encouraging records of Israel's history. Thus far throughout the Old Testament the nation has been blessed by God to come out of Egypt and its hard bondage and by being given a law to govern themselves in route to the promised land of Canaan as well as while inhabiting that land. However, along with the blessings of God came much grief caused by the people. Moses had ushered them to the very brink of Canaan and yet the generation who had witnessed God's power firsthand refused to trust it in going in and conquering the land. Now, though, a new generation has grown to adulthood, a new leader has been installed, and a new life is just over the horizon for this group of people who now will finally be heirs of the promise made unto Abraham so long ago in Genesis 13:15.

This book under consideration derives its name from the one now leading the nation. For forty years Moses had been God's tool in leading and guiding the people, but as the result of his foolish and self-exalting disobedience (Numbers 20:7-12) Moses died on Mount Nebo overlooking the much desired, blessed land. Likewise, as the one physically in charge of all of Israel's actions and goings, it had been Moses who had penned the first five books of the Bible; but now Joshua, Moses minister and apprentice, has been appointed by God to lead the people as capably as did Moses. And just as Moses' leadership proved him worthy and qualified to pen the inspired texts of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, so does Joshua's leadership prove him worthy and qualified to write of the nations' battles fought and victories achieved as it enters and inhabits the promised land.

The date in which Joshua wrote is agreed upon by most scholars to not be exactly known. However, the general span of somewhere between 1400-1350 B.C. can be safely known to be the time this literary work was done. This conclusion is reached based on the fact that Moses died shortly before 1400 B.C., and the events of Joshua supposedly cover a span of up to fifty years. Therefore given the fact that Joshua wrote over a period of time as he found time, the writing would fall between these dates, with it being finished before 1350 B.C.

Wherein the first five books of the Bible are referred to as the books of law, Joshua begins a section of scripture that continues through Esther that is rightly designated the books of history, for they record the events of the nation of Israel covering almost 1,000 years. Joshua's experiences and writings include the beloved records of "the spies sent to Jericho and received by Rahab; crossing the Jordan, the invasion of the land, the fall of Jericho, the sin of Achan and the defeat at Ai, Israel at Ebal and Gerazim, the battle of Beth-eron when the sun stood still, the division of the land, the appointment of six cities of refuge, and Joshua's farewell address and death" (Dunn).

The essential message drawn from Joshua's record of sacred history is the faithfulness of God in the keeping of His promises (Dunn). For hundreds upon hundreds of years now, God's promise made to Abraham about his children inhabiting a blessed land has, in man's mind, been hanging in the balance. However, what man's eye could not see was God's providence working behind the scenes for those hundreds of years, ensuring everything to work out exactly as had been promised. Many still today will say that God never did fulfill His promise to Abraham and the children of Israel concerning this inheritance of land, but Joshua boldly declares it to have been done (Joshua 24:13—see also 24:18). God is faithful to fulfill His promises. He has proven that faithfulness in the past to the people of old, and that proof serves as confirmation of the fact that He will be faithful to the promises He has made unto man today (II Peter 3:9).

Perhaps, though, the most intriguing of the studies in which one can engage in Joshua is how Christ is pictured. One can find Christ's presence in Joshua in at least two ways. First of all Christ can be seen in Joshua himself who is a type of Christ. In fact Joshua's name in the Hebrew language is *Yeshua* and means "Yahweh (God) is Salvation." But likewise is the fact that the name "Joshua" is the Hebrew equivalent of the name "Jesus" illustrated by Hebrews 4:8 in which it is said of Joshua, "*For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.*" It was Joshua who in victoriously leading the children of God to their possessions foreshadowed Christ who will bring "many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10). Second, though, Christ is seen figuratively through Rahab's scarlet cord, for it was through Rahab's bloodline that Christ was born incarnate into this world (Matthew 1:5).

The book of Joshua is a book of hope, faithfulness, blessing, and redemption. As it is studied, analyzed and applied, may its message resound deep within the heart of each Christian for the hope, faithfulness, blessing, and redemption found in Christ.

-Andy Brewer