

## **March (C2C)**

(Comments based on ESV text)

March 1 — **Warning** — Deut. 27-28. Did you come away from today's reading feeling a bit negative? After Israel entered the Promised Land, like an antiphonal choir, half of them were to remind each other by shouting blessings and the other half by shouting curses from opposing mountain tops on each side of Shechem. But in our reading for today, only the curses were mentioned—12 of them. Then, in chapter 28, the first 14 verses innumerate national blessings that would follow continued obedience to God's commandments. Following this are 53 verses listing the negative consequences of disobedience. Why did they need four times more warnings of disasters than promises of blessings? I think the answer is that they had a natural bent toward disobedience. Even though we have the Holy Spirit living in us today, we still have a sinful nature that bends us toward disobedience.

March 2 — **Purpose** — Deut. 29-31. Why are we reading through the Bible this year? An important purpose is given in our reading for today. Every seven years all the people of Israel were to gather to hear the Law read to them. In Israel's other collective celebrations, only the men were required to assemble at the place where the Ark of the Covenant was located. But every seven years *all* the people, including wives, children, and foreign servants, were to assemble. Why? Because being exposed to the Word of God is so important. Some of the benefits are listed in 31:11-12, i.e., that they may "*hear ... learn ... fear ... [and] do.*" As we read, we are hearing what is of vital importance to us; we are learning to fear God, both in the sense of respecting Him and dreading the results of disobedience; we also are enabling ourselves to do what it says. And as God said in 30:11 & 14, it is "*not too hard for you ... so you can do it.*"

March 3 — **Words of Life** — Deut. 32-34. The Pentateuch closes with the Song of Moses and the strong reminder that the words of the law given by God through Moses were of vital importance. Moses said that "*it is no empty word for you, but your very life ...*" Jesus is called "*the word of life*" (1 John 1:1) and the gospel is "*the word of life*" (Phil. 2:16). Jesus said that the one who "*hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life*" (John 5:24). The Word of God contains words of life. What we are reading is not just history or literature; we are reading God's words of life to us. They are powerful, life-changing words. In 1874, Philip Bliss wrote a hymn pointing out that in Jesus and in the gospel, are the Wonderful Words of Life:

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life,  
Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life;  
Words of life and beauty teach me faith and duty.

Christ, the blessed One, gives to all wonderful words of life;  
Sinner, list to the loving call, wonderful words of life;  
All so freely given, wooing us to heaven.

Sweetly echo the Gospel call, wonderful words of life;  
Offer pardon and peace to all, wonderful words of life;  
Jesus, only Savior, sanctify us forever.

Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life,  
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.

March 4 — **Getting Your Feet Wet** — Josh. 1-3. Today we begin the historical section of the Old Testament. The book of Joshua tells of the primary conquest of the Promised Land, as God punishes the inhabitants for their persistent idolatry and drives them out through Joshua's leadership. Did you know that the origin of the expression "get your feet wet" comes from our passage today? God told Joshua that the Jordan River would not stop flowing *until* the feet of the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the water (3:13). The dictionary now defines the getting-your-feet-wet expression as "to start doing something for the first time" but originally it had more to do with the action-element of faith. Sometimes God challenges us to demonstrate that we believe Him by stepping out in an action of faith. For instance, in Luke 6:35, Jesus promises that "*your reward will be great,*" but that promise requires getting our feet wet first. How? "*Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.*" Just as God promised Joshua that his concentration on the Book of the Law would result in his way being prosperous (1:8), so our daily exposure to the Word of God will bring us spiritual benefits.

March 5 — **Warriors** — Josh. 4-6. When I began this project, I didn't intend to write comments every day but it has turned out that my biggest problem now is deciding between many things I would like to write about. God's Word is inexhaustible in its depth and richness. When we read Numbers 30-32, I commented that we would have to see later how many fighting men from the two and a half tribes settling on the east side of the Jordan River would be required to go with the rest of Israel to fight on the west side. Today we got our answer: 40,000 (4:9). When the census was taken of all the men 20 years of age and older, there were a total of 110,580 from these 2.5 tribes (Num. 26:7, 18, 34). So, the 40,000 who crossed the Jordan were only 36.2% of their available fighting men, and the rest were allowed to stay as guards in the towns and cities where their families were living. Okay, it is not a spiritual insight, but it was interesting to me.

March 6 — **Stealing from God** — Josh. 7-8. Achan's sin was not only that he disobeyed the command in 6:19 that none of Israel's fighters were to share the spoils of

Jericho but that he stole from God. All the city's silver, gold, bronze, and iron were to be dedicated (given) to Yahweh. This reminded me of the quick and severe punishment given to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) when they lied about what they were giving to God. When Ai was later destroyed, God allowed the fighters to share in the things captured in the city (8:27). If only Achan had been obedient and waited, he could have shared in the wealth of Ai. Sin never seems to have patience. It must be satisfied *now*. "*Those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land*" (Ps. 37:9).

March 7 — **Questioning Obedience?** Josh. 9-11. The basic conquest of the land was completed in about seven years, although the quick summary in our reading today makes it seem much shorter. Twice it is mentioned that "*all that breathed*" were killed because God had commanded it (10:40, 11:12). Why did the children and animals have to die? That certainly seems unnecessary and unfair to us but somehow it fits perfectly into God's character of being both just and loving. After Joshua learned the importance of seeking the LORD's direction before acting, the conquest proceeded smoothly. It involved a combination requiring the action of Israel's fighting men and God keeping His promise to Joshua that He had "*given them into your hands*" (10:8) by using large hailstones (10:11) and hardening the hearts of their enemies so they would not want to fight (11:20). We don't always understand God's reasons and ways, but we can be confident that He acts powerfully for those who are committed to being obedient to Him.

March 8 — **Living Word** — Josh. 12-14. Since much of our reading today involves a summary of what was previously related, it might be a good time to review and add to Stephen Altrogge's reasons for continuing to read when it doesn't seem "to do anything" to us spiritually. We should keep reading because 1) It acknowledges that we depend on God, 2) We are lining up for the promised rewards to those who seek Him, 3) We are planting trees that will bear fruit later. A fourth reason he gives is that because of the nature of His Word, God is speaking to us whether we realize it or not. This "*living and active*" (Heb. 4:12), God-breathed Word (2 Tim. 3:16), abides (John 8:31), is at work in believers (1 Thess. 2:13), and will accomplish His purpose in us (Is. 55:11). Before reading each day, ask God to use what you read to mold you into the likeness of Jesus.

March 9 — **Could Not—Would Not?** Josh. 15-17. God told Israel that they would drive out the inhabitants of the Promised Land (Ex. 23:31) because Yahweh would work for them (Josh. 13:6). But in our reading for today, we saw that Judah "*could not*" drive out the people from Jerusalem (15:63), which David would accomplish later. Like Israel's earlier failure to conquer Ai because of the sin of Achan (Josh. 7), their failure at Jerusalem was also likely a consequence of sin. In 16:10 we read that Ephraim "*did not*" drive out the Canaanites in Gezer but made them "*to do forced labor*." This sounds more like unwillingness than inability. If they were strong enough to make them slaves, they should have been able to conquer them. We then saw a similar situation in 17:12-13 where Manasseh "*could not*" take possession of some of their Canaanite cities but were later able to cause them to do forced labor. Joshua had faith to believe that they could do it if they would (17:18). God had commanded that all these people be killed in order to remove the temptation of being drawn away to worship other gods. How many

times do we miss out on the blessings of God because we are not willing to completely obey Him?

March 10 — **Lots by Lot** — Josh. 18-20. I was puzzled by the system of apportioning the last seven territories on the west side of the Jordan. A “committee” of three men from each tribe geographically surveyed the remaining land to divide it (18:4). A map describing those areas shows they were not equal in size. The population counts of the remaining tribes were not equal, ranging from Simeon at 22,200 men (Num. 26:12) to Dan at 64,400 (Num. 26:42). What if the largest tribe drew the lot of the smallest territory? The seven areas were also not equal in terms of the number of existing cities, ranging from 12 (19:16) to 22 (19:30). Earlier, God had instructed Moses that the land inheritance should be divided and given by lot according to the size of the tribe (Num. 33:54). Perhaps the key is in the word “*lot*.” God would use the lot to put each tribe in the place He chose for them. Prov. 16:33 says that “*The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.*” Sometimes we feel that we drew the “short straw” in one phase of our life but God has promised that in whatever circumstance we might find ourselves, “*for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose*” (Rom. 8:28).

March 11 — **Still Here?** Josh. 21-22. It just dawned on me that in 21:1, Eleazar the priest is still alive and with the group in the Promised Land, although he was not listed with Joshua and Caleb as being the only two men over 20 years of age to escape the penalty of death from their grumbling and disobedience in the wilderness. Aaron’s other son, Ithamar, was not mentioned as still being alive after they crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Since the descendants of Aaron received 13 cities (21:4), there were probably 13 men at that time who were priests. Although only one son of Eleazar is mentioned: Phinehas (Num. 25:7) and no sons of Ithamar are named, there must have been more. The cities mentioned were all in Judah, Simeon and Benjamin, which were closest to Jerusalem, the ultimate home of the temple. The location of the first tabernacle was in Shiloh, further north in Ephraim.

March 12 — **Serve the Lord!** Josh. 23-24. The first 13 verses of chapter 24 are a great summary of God’s dealing with Israel, from Abraham to Joshua. We should have read it before we started Genesis 12 so we could get a nutshell-view of where we were going. The book of Joshua closes with his challenge to Israel to choose to be faithful to Yahweh in contrast to the gods of Abraham’s ancestors and the gods of the people who occupied the Promised Land, and then concludes with his famous declaration that “*as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*” (24:15). What a great death-bed statement! Serving God is a strong emphasis in this book. The word “*serve*” is used 16 times in this final chapter. May our lives be characterized by faithful, enthusiastic, and tenacious allegiance to the God of Joshua!

March 13 — **Judges** — Judges 1-3. Today, we begin a new book that has a somewhat confusing title. It features stories of 16 leaders (“*judges*”) who deliver sections of Israel from its enemies’ power and control. Normally, we think of judges as people who make decisions to settle disputes but here they are primarily military leaders—men of war.

Perhaps we could think of them as “*judges*” in the sense of bringing judgment from God to Israel’s enemies. Some of these judges even have questionable moral standards and practices. The book paints a rather pathetic picture of the quickly deteriorating spiritual life of God’s chosen people. It is pointed out in 2:10 that in just one generation, the spiritual climate changed dramatically. God had promised much to Israel with the condition that they would obey His direction. What a different story we could have read in these historical books of the Old Testament if they had been faithful in following the Lord! Are we being faithful to God? Are we undergoing trouble and missing out on blessings because we accept many of the world’s standards and are haphazard in our attention and obedience to God?

March 14 — **Wonder Women** — Judg. 4-5. Today’s reading has a focus on women—three of them. Deborah was quite a woman: a prophetess, a wife, and a judge (4:4); she was respected by Barak (4:8) and had the respectful title, “a mother in Israel” (5:7); she was a leader, summoning Barak (4:6) and telling him what to do (4:14); she was godly, giving the LORD praise for victory (5:3). It is interesting that the Hebrew word for “*sang*” (5:1) is in the feminine form, subtly excluding Barak. The second woman was Jael (4:21), who was “only” a wife but had the dramatic role of finishing off the mighty military commander, Sisera, with a tent peg through the head. She is called “*most blessed of women*” (5:24) and is portrayed as being generous (5:25). The third woman was the tragic mother of Sisera as she feared his death (5:28). There are many other important women mentioned in Scripture that we will read about this year but probably not in such concentrated form. Thank God for all of you who are godly wives and mothers!

March 15 — **Worry Warrior** — Judges 6-7. Gideon was a mix. He was like us in many ways. He had a low self-image and he worried a lot. When challenged by God for a task, he pointed to his low position in his family and his family’s low position in his clan (6:13). He worried about God’s apparent abandonment of His people and felt forsaken, even though his father had a large wooden Asherah idol and an image of Baal that was so big it had to be pulled down by a bull—an obvious sign that Israel “*did what was evil in the sight of the LORD*” (6:1). The problem of idolatry wasn’t just with Gideon’s dad—the whole town was so upset with the destruction of the idols, they wanted Gideon to be killed (6:30). Gideon worried about the strange appearance of the angel of the LORD and asked for a confirming sign, which the angel granted, ironically burning up the food Gideon had worked so hard to prepare (6:21). Then Gideon worried about the promise of victory, asking for a two-phase fleece sign, admitting that he was pushing God’s patience (6:39). Again, showing worry and doubt, Gideon spied out the enemy camp at night to listen to what they were saying about him (7:10-11). We might remember Gideon mostly as a warrior, the man who routed an uncountable army with 300 men, but he was also a worrier like we are so many times, doubting God.

March 16 — **Downhill Slide** — Judges 8-9. What a transition! It started with the angel of the LORD calling Gideon to deliver Israel from the Midianites. It ended with one of his sons, Abimelech, grabbing leadership by killing all of his brothers except one. This downhill trend began early with Gideon’s actions of taking revenge on two cities that

would not help him and subsequently having an ephod made that became a religious snare (8:27). It was interesting to me that after Gideon's death, the use of his name reverted to the Baal-connected Zerubbaal (8:35), perhaps marking Israel's most recent shift away from allegiance to Yahweh. After this, the name Gideon is used only once in the Bible, in Heb. 11:32. Being committed to God is a lifetime endeavor that governs all that we do. If we allow our attention and obedience to begin to slide, it will not only sour our own lives but will likely infect our children and grandchildren as well, causing ruin in their lives.

March 17 — **Smart, Sweet or Stubborn?** Judges 10-12. I was impressed with Jephthah's knowledge of the history of Israel's travel to, and entrance into, the Promised Land. That was a 300-year-old history! How much could you talk about the history of America in 1721? Me neither. So, Jephthah was a great historian. But he was a very bad vow-maker, promising that he would sacrifice to the LORD whatever came out of his house when he arrived home. What was he thinking?! He only had one child and he apparently had only one wife. Did he expect a lamb to come out of his house to greet him?! Too bad that we don't know the name of his daughter. She was sweet and submissive. I would rather be remembered as sweet than stubborn, so I should guard my lips today, being very careful about the promises I make.

March 18 — **Engineer or Machinist?** Judges 13-15. Samson's father was an engineer! He must have been because he wanted to know all the details. Although Manoah's wife told him that the man who spoke to her was "*a man of God*," that he was like "*the angel of God*," [and] "*very awesome*" (13:6), yet he still did not know "*he was the angel of the LORD*" (:16). When asked for another detail, his name, the angel refused, but said that it was "*wonderful*" (:18). Finally, when the angel rose in the flame and smoke of Manoah's sacrifice, he and his wife were both convinced that this "*man*" was way more than human, rather "*the angel of the LORD*" (:21), and they fell on their faces (:20). We often act like engineer-Christians, wanting to know all the details of God's plans for us and our family before we are willing to believe or step out in faith. Rather, we ought to be more like the shop machinist who just reads the blueprint and gets to work.

March 19 — **Weak Samson** — Judges 16-18. Although he was Israel's judge for 31 years (16:31), he was a very weak politician. He could carry Gaza's city gates 40 miles from Gaza to Hebron (16:3) but he could not stand up to the hen-pecking of Delilah (16:16). He acted as stupidly as Jephthah with his vow in chapter 11. After Delilah carried out what he suggested in his three previous lies, did he really think that she wouldn't carry out this one as well by cutting his hair?! (16:17). The sad and tragic story of Samson ended with his dramatic death in Gaza, the same city where his moral slide began when he went to the prostitute (16:1). That reminds me of the verse my mother used to quote to me often: "*be sure your sin will find you out*" (Num. 32:23).

March 20 — **National Tragedy** — Judges 19-21. This book ends with a tragedy that threatened the continuation of one of Israel's tribes, Benjamin. When Israel crossed over into the Promised Land 300 years earlier, there were 46,000 warriors from Benjamin (Josh. 18:28). In our reading for today, that number had decreased to 26,000.

The moral condition of that tribe had dwindled as well. The men who raped and killed the concubine were called “worthless fellows” in 19:22 (cf. 20:13), but in 20:5 they are described as “*the leaders of Gibeah*.” Moral deterioration had permeated the whole spectrum of their social and political structure. That the leaders of the city were involved might explain why the whole tribe was willing to support the evil action by standing up against 400,000 of their fellow Israelites in battle. That should be a reminder for us to pray for the moral and spiritual condition of the political leaders of our country.

March 21 — **The Hand of God** — Ruth 1-4. We can see the directing hand of God throughout this story. God knew from the beginning that He wanted Ruth to be the great-grandmother of King David (4:17). She was a foreigner (2:10), but she was still God’s choice. Her father-in-law, Elimelech, was somewhat of a drifter. He was from the tribe of Ephraim but didn’t live in their territory, choosing Judah instead (1:1-2). When God allowed a famine there, Elimelech drifted with his family to Moab on the east side of the Jordan River where Ruth lived. After the death of all three men in the family, Ruth made an important decision, choosing Naomi over her own mother (1:8), the Israelites over her own Moabites, and the LORD over her own gods (1:16). Naomi chose to go back to Bethlehem, taking Ruth with her. Finally, God led Ruth to choose to glean in the field owned by Boaz (2:3), who ended up being David’s great-grandfather. Elimelech chose Moab, Mahlon chose Ruth, Ruth chose Naomi, Naomi chose Bethlehem, Boaz chose Ruth. Is God leading you through unfamiliar territory or uncomfortable situations right now? Even though it might not be recognized until your great-grandchildren are grown, God is guiding you and using you for His wonderful plan and great glory. Rejoice in it!

March 22 — **1 & 2 Samuel** — 1 Samuel 1-3. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel provide a literary sandwich of an important part of Israel’s history, with Samuel and David being mostly good slices of bread and Saul serving as a rotting slab of meat between them. Samuel functions as the godly transition leader between the periods of the judges and the kings. He was born in answer to prayer, dramatically called to serve as a judge (1 Sam. 7:15), a prophet (1 Sam. 3:20), and the one who anointed the nation’s first king (1 Sam. 10:1). King Saul was a promising first king but deteriorated in character, into selfish, jealous leadership, until God moved him out of the way to begin an eternal kingdom, with David as its first king and the Messiah as its last. We don’t know who wrote 1 & 2 Samuel, or at least, who finished them. because Samuel died before the events of the second book (1 Sam. 25:1). These books provide great lessons for today’s Christians about the importance and wisdom of serving the LORD wholeheartedly.

March 23 — **Lucky Charm?** 1 Samuel 4-7. There was no indication that Israel sought the LORD’s direction before going against the Philistines (4:3). Then after their first defeat, rather than pray, they brought their “lucky charm,” the ark of the covenant, with them to the battlefield. It didn’t work. Israel was defeated, the ark was stolen, and Eli and his two sons and a daughter-in-law died on the same day. After seven months of God-caused disasters in the Philistine cities, God sent the ark back to Israel in a

miraculous way. Finally, Israel was challenged by Samuel to repent, making a 180-degree turn away from foreign gods toward the LORD (7:3). Then, when the Philistines later threatened Israel, rather than trying to use God as a lucky charm, they consulted the LORD (7:8), and He routed the enemy with a giant “Boo!,” using heavenly thunder, perhaps even without clouds! When will we learn to quit asking God to bless our cleverly devised plans instead of asking for direction to His perfect plan?! Rather than being a lucky charm, He is the controller of thunder who can do far more than we can imagine.

March 24 — **Tall, Dark, and Handsome** — 1 Samuel 8-10. God said that having a king was a step down for Israel because “*they have rejected me from being king over them*” (8:7). Most of the world around us today has the same selfish, independent attitude of wanting to rule their own lives instead of submitting to God. Nevertheless, God miraculously directed the process of choosing a king for Israel. He used lost donkeys to bring Saul and Samuel together. He confirmed to Saul that Samuel’s anointing was genuine by fulfilling three predictions (10:2-6). Although God had already chosen Saul privately, He used the casting of lots publicly to identify the new tall (probably dark) and handsome king (10:20-21). God loved His chosen people, even in their willful, wayward ways, and worked to provide something good for them. Although we might not recognize it, God sees our attitudes and actions to be similar, yet provides us with His loving direction and blessing. Praise to the Lord, our eternal King!

March 25 — **Empty or Profitable Things?** 1 Samuel 11-13. Samuel challenged the people to “*not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty*” (12:21). He was probably referring to idols but it is a picture that more broadly fits many things today as well. It reminds me of Dr. Jim Borror’s oft-repeated warning: “You never find in sin what you enter sin to find.” Have we been “turning aside” to things that occupy too much of our time and attention that don’t really matter? Or are we concentrating on things that have eternal value? Prayer is one of those important things. When Sharon and I left for the Philippines in 1968, we left a card behind for our friends to put on their refrigerator doors to remind them to pray for us. On that card was printed part of a verse from our reading today: “*God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you*” (12:23, KJV). Let’s put first things first today, like praying for someone!

March 26 — **Supreme Obedience** — 1 Samuel 14-15. You probably feel sorry for Saul because God had commanded him to totally wipe out the Amalekites and everything they had—an order given earlier in other contexts. It is hard for us to understand why the innocent children and animals had to be killed as well but it was the command of the infinitely wise God. When confronted by Samuel, Saul first laid the blame on “*the people*” (15:15, 21). His second defense (vs. 22) was that he saved some animals for sacrifice to the LORD. Sounds good. But Samuel replied: “*to obey is better than sacrifice*.” To sacrifice was not bad but it did not make up for disobeying God’s command. The good does not replace the best. Obedience is supreme and we must guard against trying to do something good as a substitute for doing what God requires.



March 27 — **Speechless Speeches** — 1 Samuel 16-17. There are two memorable speeches in our reading for today that rather takes one's breath away. The first is from God. Samuel thought he had discerned God's choice for the next king but God gave him a great lesson in perspective: "*The LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart*" (16:7). The second speech is the one David gave to Goliath before killing him. It was solidly based on his trust in God's ability and willingness to deliver Israel. "*I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts ... whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand ... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel ... For the battle is the LORD's*" (17:45-47). May our speech today reflect our wonder at the wisdom, power, and honor of our Lord.

March 28 — **Accepting Defeat** — 1 Samuel 18-20. Saul was a poor loser. Samuel already told him that God had rejected him as king (15:23) but he refused to accept it as God's will. In one jealous statement (18:8), he feared that David would take his kingdom from him, and twice he tried to kill him with a spear (18:11). Later, for the third time, Saul unsuccessfully tried to pin David to the wall with his spear while he played the lyre (19:10). In 20:31, Saul was still trying to protect his kingdom and perhaps Jonathan as his successor but he made it clear that he wanted to kill David by throwing his spear at his own son. Saul was not only a poor loser but he was also a bad shot! How foolish and futile it is to go against God's stated will! Do we use creative interpretation to try to reason our way around the direction that God has given to us in His Word? Do we try to substitute a different action because we don't want to do what God requires? Do we try to run away from responsibility in Jonah-like fashion? That would also be foolish as well as futile.

March 29 — **Leadership** — 1 Samuel 21-24. In today's reading, we see the patience of David, God's "anointed but waiting" king, being unwilling to make way for his national leadership by killing the first king, Saul. The servants of Achish, king of the Philistine city of Gath even called David "*the king of the land*" (21:11). David shined as a leader with faith and confidence when he told Abiathar, Ahimelech's escaped son, that "*with me you shall be in safekeeping*" (22:23). And Jonathan reflected David's faith and confidence in safety from Saul, adding that he knew David would be the next king (23:17). David was a leader-magnet. Four hundred family and miscellaneous people rallied to him as their leader (22:2) and David's army grew to 600 (23:13). His patient leadership was climaxed when he had the opportunity to kill Saul but spared his life in the cave, even feeling remorse that he had cut off part of Saul's robe (24:5-6).

March 30 — **Character** — 1 Samuel 25-27. Our passage for today says a lot about character. First, there was the tightfisted "*worthless*" character of Nabal (25:17, 25) who lived up to his name, which means "fool." The beginning of the story tells us that Nabal "*was very rich*" (25:2), yet he was worthless. He was valuable in assets but worthless in character. Then, there was the suspicious character of Saul who chased David again (26:2) after having confessed his earlier sin of pursuing an innocent man (24:17-18). Finally, we see that Achish, the king of Gath, "*trusted David*," although, in his previous encounter, he declared that David was a madman (21:14). We may be surrounded by

people of questionable character who are suspicious or stingy toward us but our focus should be on being faithful to God with an upright character.

March 31 — **Giving Credit** — 1 Samuel 28-31. It was a good thing that David was rejected by the Philistine generals to join them in battle because he would have been involved in the death of Saul and his sons. After returning to his burned-out city of Ziklag, David was directed by God to pursue the Amalekite raiders. With 400 men, David defeated a much larger army, because only 400 Amalekites managed to escape on camels (30:17). In allowing the spoils from the Amalekites to be shared with the 200 exhausted men who stayed behind, David acknowledged that it was God's victory, not theirs (30:23), so he gave proper credit to God. Many of you have expressed appreciation for these daily comments I write to you, but David reminds me to tell you that each morning before I read and take notes, and again before I write, I ask God for guidance and for Him to give me something that will challenge and encourage you. I, therefore, give credit to God for what He directs me to write.