

## ***INCOMPLETE***

Judges 1:28

*"And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out."*

A troubling statement in the verse above is that Israel *"did not utterly drive them out."* Israel's action not to utterly drive out the enemy was an incomplete task that they should have completed. God did not give them a task to do only to do part of what He said to do. When God gave His people the command to utterly drive out all the inhabitants of the land, He expected them to obey. What Israel didn't understand was that it didn't matter if they thought they could control the remainder inhabitants; it was the fact that they disobeyed God by not completely obeying Him. The incomplete task was detrimental to their future as it is always with anyone who doesn't complete what they start.

One great character flaw of many that keeps God from using them greatly is not finishing what they start. God never expects His people to be incomplete in what He gives them to do. Imagine if God followed the incomplete mentality in creation, this world would be a mess. Not to complete what you are supposed to do in ANY task, but especially the task that God gives you to do will lead you to a life of mediocrity and regret. There are several things that the incomplete mentality does.

First, incomplete is a revelation of your laziness. The fact that you won't complete everything you are supposed to do shows your lack of character and laziness. Only lazy people won't complete what they start. It does not matter how insignificant the incomplete task may seem to you; the fact that you left it incomplete shows you are lazy.

Second, incomplete shows your lack of respect for God. It is a lack of respect because you are saying that you know better than God. It is a lack of respect for God because incomplete is disobedience. To accept incomplete is to say that God didn't know what He was doing when He wanted you to complete the task. God is not a God of mediocrity but of excellence, and excellence never leaves a task incomplete; it finishes even the tiny task.

Third, incomplete always influences others not to do the job completely. Your laziness in disrespect toward God to leave tasks incomplete teaches others that it is okay not to finish what they start. When you read the verses that follow the verse above, you will see that many others did not drive out the inhabitants that they were to drive out. You are teaching others a bad character trait not to finish everything when you leave things incomplete.

Fourth, incomplete always comes back to hurt you. Leaving things incomplete is a bad habit to teach because it always will hurt you at the most inopportune time. If you completely finish everything, you will never have to worry about that task demanding to be finished at a time when you are doing something else. Many have hindered their future because they are trying to complete unfinished tasks from the past instead of putting their whole effort into the present task.

Let me ask, do you find yourself leaving things incomplete? Do you get things mostly done? Are there things lying around your house or office that have been incomplete for some time? Make it a

habit to finish what you start before going on to the next task, and you will never be one to have to go back to finish the incomplete tasks in the future.

## ***TEACHING YOUTH COURAGE***

Judges 8:20

*“And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth.”*

One thing that needs to be developed in young people is the courage to do something for the LORD. One reason Gideon's son did not draw his sword was because he didn't have the courage to do it. Gideon taught his son to fear by being fearful of the Midianites. You will recall that Gideon was hiding in fear when God called him. Yes, Gideon became a great hero of faith, but his fearful actions before this time taught his son to live by fear instead of living by courage and faith. As much as Gideon tried to teach him courage, the damage had already been done.

Many parents unknowingly teach their children to fear by their actions. You cannot live a life in fear and expect to turn out courageous children who attempt great things for God by faith. You are teaching your children by your life example, and if you don't do right now, you are teaching your children not to do right. The need for children to learn to be courageous is critical to be taught when they are a youth so that they will be courageous and live by faith as an adult. How do we teach courage to children?

First, don't accept excuses from your children. Excuses are a damper to courage. Once you allow your children to give an excuse, they will always refer to an excuse when courage is needed. You must be firm about teaching your children to come up with a solution to their difficulties. Teach your children that difficulties are opportunities to become stronger and for God to do the miraculous if they will not give an excuse. You will hinder your child's courage as long as you allow excuses instead of solutions.

Second, let them attempt things bigger than themselves. It is good for children to want to do something that seems to be beyond their abilities because this teaches them courage. You might assist them as they do this great task, but don't do it for them. Instead of discouraging a child from attempting something big, encourage them to work towards whatever it is that seems bigger than them. You can do this by having them set spiritual goals and then letting them attempt to reach them. This gives them courage to attempt great things for God.

Third, get them involved in ministry. Serving the LORD takes courage. It takes courage to stand for right despite the criticism and attacks from those who don't want to do right. Getting your children to serve the LORD will give them a thick skin when they face criticism as an adult. Children learn courage by being a soul winner, working on a bus route, and inviting people to church, and that courage will continue when they become an adult.

Fourth, teach them to trust the LORD. One way to teach your children to trust the LORD is through faith-promise giving. Children need to learn to trust the LORD by faith. Faith-promise giving is a great way to teach your children how to trust the LORD that He can provide when they don't know how He will provide.

Fifth, be an example by attempting great things by faith. The best way you can teach your children courage is to attempt something great by faith, and when they see God come through for you, it will give them the courage to attempt great things by faith when they become an adult.

## ***CONTENTED WITH TARRYING***

Judges 19:6

*“And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.”*

God commands us to be content with such things as we have, but He did not say to be content with doing nothing for Him. Too many are content with doing nothing, and then they wonder why their lives are so empty when they come to the end of life. God never intended for the believer to be content with doing nothing; rather, He created us to desire to do more and conquer something.

The verse above is about a man who had found his concubine at her father's house after she left him. He went to get her, and her father compelled this man to stay after he intended to leave. For several days, this father asked this man to be content to tarry, and he did. The tragic ending of this story would likely not have happened had this man not tarried and left when he originally intended to leave. Let me point out a few observations about being content with tarrying.

First, “content” always comes before tarrying. The word “content” means to be at peace with the limits. In other words, there is no faith by living in a world where you are content with what you have done. A lack of desire is always a result of contentment with accomplishments. A lack of vision is the result of not having desire. People die when you have no vision and are content with your accomplishments.

Second, tarrying comes before lack of accomplishment. When you tarry, you no longer accomplish what you are supposed to accomplish for the LORD. Tarrying is a faithless life because it is a motionless life. Faith is a forward life that cannot have tarrying. When you choose to tarry, you choose not to live by faith. When you choose not to live by faith, you choose to displease the LORD.

Third, conquering sin follows the lack of accomplishment. You are going to conquer something, and when you choose not to conquer something for the LORD, you will find that you will try to conquer sin to the point that sin conquers you. When the children of Israel tarried while Moses was praying is when they went into sin. Many have lulled themselves into sin because they tarried instead of conquering in the LORD's work.

My friend, never be content with what you have done for the LORD. What I mean by this statement is that you should always desire to do more for God instead of living in past accomplishments. To live in past accomplishments is to live a life of pride in telling everyone what you have done instead of living a life of faith that forces you to trust God.

Let me ask, are you content to tarry with what you have already done for God? Pastor, you should desire and work for God to build your church. Believer, you should desire and work for more souls to be saved. Ministry worker, you should not be content with the size of your Sunday school class or bus route, but you should have a great desire and work towards that desire to reach more people. Satan is pleased when you are content to tarry with what you have conquered for the LORD because he knows that will lead to no souls being saved. Let me challenge you never to be content to tarry, but

get a desire and drive to work to see God do greater and mightier things through your life and ministry.

## **WHY GOD AFFLICTS**

Ruth 1:21

*"I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"*

Naomi made a statement that we often overlook as to the importance of why she came back to God. She said, *"the Almighty hath afflicted me."* She understood that the only reason she came back to God was because God afflicted her. Without the affliction, she would have stayed in Moab and never received God's blessings by being the one that guided Ruth who eventually was placed in the lineage of Christ.

To be afflicted means to be troubled, burdened, distressed, or to cause suffering. There are many who will say that the LORD will not afflict you, but this is not true. God does afflict you, but His reasoning for afflicting you always has a positive effect if you let the affliction do the work for why He sent it. When studying the Scriptures, there are several reasons as to why God afflicts His people.

First, God afflicts His children to get them to come back to Him. God's affliction on Naomi's life caused her to come back home to God. When affliction comes in your life, you need to look at where you have strayed and come back to God. God desires that you serve Him, and He will afflict you to get you to come back to Him if He must. Now, this affliction that God must administer is not done in hatred but in love because He knows that serving Him is where true joy is found. Don't let God have to afflict you to cause you to come back to Him, but when affliction does come, always do a spiritual inventory to see where you might have strayed.

Second, God afflicts His children to get them to trust Him. Naomi had a trusting issue, and that was that she followed money over trusting God to provide for her needs. God not only wants you to trust Him, but He commands you to trust Him. God will bring affliction on your life to bring you to the end of yourself so that you are forced to trust Him. This forced trust is not bad because it allows God to lead you, and his leading will never lead you to the wrong place.

Third, God afflicts His children to make them stronger. You cannot become stronger without affliction. The weight lifter adds weight to build strength, and God adds weight to your life to build your spiritual strength. Affliction is not a bad thing if it causes you to be a stronger Christian. Once you bear the weight of affliction, you are stronger for bearing that weight; thus, you are ready and able to do more for God. If affliction is for the sake of strengthening you, it is a good thing because that means God has planned something greater for you to do in your life.

Fourth, God afflicts His children to bring them blessings. On the other side of affliction is God's blessings. If you quit before you get to the other side, you will then dwell in affliction. God's blessings have always come after hard times; therefore, God's affliction is administered so that He can bless you.

Fifth, God afflicts His children to make them a better tool to help others. Whatever affliction you endure is a tool in your life to be a help to another person you could not have helped without that

affliction being in your life. Don't waste God's affliction in your life, but use it as a tool to help others and you will see that God's affliction was not only for His good, but for your good as well.



## ***DEALING WITH EXCEEDING SORROW***

Matthew 26:38

*"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."*

Jesus made a statement that should have arrested the attention of all the disciples. He said, *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:..."* This should have caused the disciples to be very concerned for their leader. To be exceeding sorrowful means that the burden He was carrying was too heavy to bear. It was so heavy for the Saviour that He collapsed under the weight. However, it was what He did while He was exceeding sorrowful that gave Him the strength to make it through that time of sorrow.

If the Saviour had a time that He was exceeding sorrowful, you most definitely will have times in your life that you will be exceeding sorrowful. There are times when the burden we carry is too heavy to bear. There are times when it seems as if we are going to explode under the pressure of the load. So, what do you do when you are facing exceeding sorrow? You follow the example of the Saviour to gain the strength to go forward. Let me share what Jesus did to get the strength to go forward in times of exceeding sorrow.

First, watch yourself. Jesus told the disciples to *"watch with me."* In other words, you had better be careful in times of exceeding sorrow that you don't do things that you will regret. Many have adversely responded to the pressure of exceeding sorrow to their hurt. Be careful to watch your responses to people in these times that you are not so sharp that you say things that you will later regret. You must watch that you don't go into hibernation and try to hide from your sorrows. Be careful that you don't run to sin to attempt to drown out the pressure of the sorrow. Be very watchful of what you do in times of exceeding sorrow so that you don't add sorrow to your sorrow.

Second, pray. Nothing can ease the pain of sorrow like praying. Nothing takes the pressure of exceeding sorrow off you like casting all your care upon the LORD. Instead of hibernation, you need to pray. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself, you need to pray. Instead of running to vices to drown out your sorrow, you need to pray. Prayer is the place where strength is gained to carry the burden of sorrow.

Third, ask for God's deliverance. There is nothing wrong with asking for deliverance, but understand that deliverance is not taking it away but taking you all the way through the sorrow. The Father didn't take the sorrow away from Jesus, but He gave Him the strength to go through the sorrow. Yes, God can take away that which brings sorrow, but likely He will give you the strength to go through it so that it can make you better and stronger.

Fourth, accept God's will. When Jesus understood that the sorrow would not be taken away but that He must go through it is when He said, *"not as I will, but as thou wilt."* Getting bitter over God's will not agreeing with your will only makes your sorrow greater. Accept that God knows what is best and that what you are going through is His grand plan for your life. God wants what is best, and you must accept that He is doing what is best for you and for eternity.

Finally, when the sorrow continues, pray again. Pray again until you get through your sorrow. As long as you carry the sorrow you must pray again. It is praying again that gives you the strength to make it through today and until you get to the other side of sorrow.

## ***GETTING TO KNOW GOD***

Psalm 46:10

*“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”*

People often want to get to know God, and they say they want to know Him, but they never spend time with Him to get to know Him. You are sure not to get to know God if you don't spend time with Him. Now, what does it mean to “know” God? To know someone means you recognize them or intimately know their characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. To know God is to have a conscience of Him, be aware of Him, and to be close to Him.

Every person who has ever known God in the Scriptures spent much time with Him. Moses spent much time with God, and that is why He got to know God. Imagine if the children of Israel had gotten to know God as Moses did; they would have never murmured, griped, and wanted to go back to Egypt had they known God as did Moses. The reason Moses was able to always see a way out of their situations was because he knew God.

David was another person in the Scriptures that knew God like no other person in his day. It was God who said that David was a man after His own heart. In other words, David constantly pursued getting to know God better. The Scriptures teach us four ways that we get to know God.

First, you get to know God in the battle of trials. Those who quit in the hard times never get to know God. God reveals Himself in your trials as to what He can do for you. You get to know His faithfulness, power, and tender love for you in the trials. It was while the disciples were in the storms that they got to know Jesus and His power to calm the storms. It is the storms that force us to the prayer closet so that we get to know God in a greater way.

Second, you get to know God in the yoke of service. Matthew 11:29 says, *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;...”* No person ever gets to know God without being in His yoke and serving with Him. You don't get to know people through fellowship, but you get to know them when you work with them. The greatest relationship to enjoy in life is found when you choose to yoke up with Christ in service.

Third, you get to know God in the closet of prayer. The verse above says, *“Be still, and know that I am God:...”* Matthew 6:6 shows us what being still means when it says, *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”* To be still means to shut down all disturbances and get in your closet in prayer to spend time with God. You cannot get to know God if you don't spend time with Him in prayer. The reason so many don't get to know God is because of their lack of being still in the prayer closet. My friend, you must shut the world down to get to your prayer closet if you are going to get to know God.

Fourth, you get to know God in attempts of faith. The power of God will never be known when you keep doing what you know you can do, but you get to know God's power in a greater way when you choose to step out by faith. Living by faith is the most rewarding life because every step you

take by faith reveals more of God's power to you. If you really want to know God, step out by faith, and He will reveal Himself more to you than He has before.

## ***AVOIDING THE DIFFICULT***

1 Samuel 17:8

*“And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me.”*

Israel did what many people do daily to their destruction, and that is Israel avoided the big part of the battle hoping that it would go away. Goliath was as much a part of their enemy as was any other soldier, but they avoided him because of his size. Had it not been for David who would not allow avoidance to be a part of his life, the Philistines would have won the battle and Israel would have been captive because of their avoidance mentality.

When I was a boy, my mother worked hard at not allowing me to avoid the difficult. When there was something on my dinner plate that I didn't like, my mom would tell me to eat what I didn't like first so that the rest of the meal would be better. When I had chores that I didn't like to do, my mom would tell me to get the most difficult chore done first so that the most difficult would not keep me from accomplishing the rest. Many people go into avoidance mode when they face the difficult when they should face the difficult and get it over with so they can enjoy the rest of their day. Let me share several observations about the avoidance mentality and its hurt to your life.

First, avoidance is a faithless and lazy choice. To avoid the difficult is to say that God doesn't have the power to help you get through it. Lazy people choose to avoid the difficult; people of faith accept the challenge to overcome the difficult.

Second, avoiding the difficult doesn't make the difficult go away. Goliath was not going away, and somebody eventually had to fight him. The difficult will not resolve itself; it only becomes more difficult because of your avoidance. Just because you avoid the difficult doesn't mean that you won't have to face it; it would be better just to get over the difficult so that you don't live your life running from that which you don't want to face.

Third, avoidance defeats your spiritual confidence. You will never be able to move on from where you are until you defeat the difficult. Avoidance keeps or hinders you from living by faith. You cannot live a life of faith and run from the difficult because the life of faith is often very difficult. If you let avoidance become your trait when faced with the difficult, Satan will always know what to do to get you to stop.

Fourth, God is big enough to defeat the difficult, so stop trying to avoid it. David understood that God could defeat Goliath, and yes, it was not easy, but God came through as He always does. You are missing out on God showing you His power in your life because you run from the difficult instead of facing it. If God can create a world in six days, then He can defeat your difficult obstacles. Your God is great enough to defeat any difficult circumstance you are faced with if you would stop avoiding it.

Is the avoidance mentality controlling your life? Is avoidance your way of facing the difficult? Let me challenge you to look at the difficult as a challenge. You can let the difficult be an opportunity or an

obstacles. Accept the challenge of the difficult that you face as an opportunity for God to show His power in your life. Don't run from it or avoid it, but face it and watch God help you to be a champion for His cause.