

Joshua & Peter: The Sufficiency of God

Lesson 16: The Sufficiency of God's Salvation

Key Verse: Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Say to the people of Israel, 'Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the manslayer who strikes any person without intent or unknowingly may flee there. They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood.'~Joshua 20.1-3

You are a theologian. Yes, YOU are! You live every moment of every day according to your knowledge of God, or your theology. What you learn about God's nature, who He is and what He teaches is revealed in your reactions to the actions of others, most especially fellow believers. Your theology is revealed in where your mind runs when your circumstances turn into tragedy, as well as in triumph. Your theology dictates what you decide to do in light of other's actions, and/or tragic and triumphant circumstances. God's provision of the cities of refuge for all people reveals He alone is **our refuge**. The reaction of God's people as they are continuing to settle into their lands provides us with an excellent example of theology in action, leading to **salvation**. *My God and my Savior, my refuge and my salvation, thank you that I am Your possession and that You are my salvation. As I study you today, may I do as You command. May I love only You, walk only in Your ways, keep Your commands, clinging to You, and serving You with all my heart and soul. Amen.*

Joshua 20 Then the LORD said to Joshua, **2** "Say to the people of Israel, 'Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, **3** that the manslayer who strikes any person without intent or unknowingly may flee there. They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. **4** He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and explain his case to the elders of that city. Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them. **5** And if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not give up the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unknowingly, and did not hate him in the past. **6** And he shall remain in that city until he has stood before the congregation for judgment, until the death of him who is high priest at the time. Then the manslayer may return to his own town and his own home, to the town from which he fled.'"

7 So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah. **8** And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they appointed Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland, from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. **9** These were the cities designated for all the people of Israel and for the stranger sojourning among them, that anyone who killed a person without intent could flee there, so that he might not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, till he stood before the congregation.

CH 21 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites came to Eleazar the priest and to Joshua the son of Nun and to the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel. **2** And they said to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, "The LORD commanded through Moses that we be given cities to dwell in, along with their pasturelands for our livestock." **3** So by command of the LORD the people of Israel gave to the Levites the following cities and pasturelands out of their inheritance. **4** The lot came out for the clans of the Kohathites. So those Levites who were descendants of Aaron the priest received by lot from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, thirteen cities. **5** And the rest of the Kohathites received by lot from the clans of the tribe of Ephraim, from the tribe of Dan and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ten cities.

6 The Gershonites received by lot from the clans of the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. **7** The Merarites according to their clans received from the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. **8** These cities and their pasturelands the people of Israel gave by lot to the Levites, as the Lord had commanded through Moses. **9** Out of the tribe of the people of Judah and the tribe of the people of Simeon they gave the following cities mentioned by name, **10** which went to the descendants of Aaron, one of the clans of the Kohathites who belonged to the people of Levi; since the lot fell to them first. **11** They gave them Kiriath-arba (Arba being the father of Anak), that is Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, along with the pasturelands around it.

12 But the fields of the city and its villages had been given to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession. **13** And to the descendants of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasturelands, Libnah with its pasturelands, **14** Jattir with its pasturelands, Eshtemoa with its pasturelands, **15** Holon with its pasturelands, Debir with its pasturelands, **16** Ain with its pasturelands, Juttah with its pasturelands, Beth-shemesh with its pasturelands—nine cities out of these two tribes; **17** then out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its pasturelands, Geba with its pasturelands, **18** Anathoth with its pasturelands, and Almon with its pasturelands—four cities. **19** The cities of the descendants of Aaron, the priests, were in all thirteen cities with their pasturelands.

20 As to the rest of the Kohathites belonging to the Kohathite clans of the Levites, the cities allotted to them were out of the tribe of Ephraim. **21** To them were given Shechem, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasturelands in the hill country of Ephraim, Gezer with its pasturelands, **22** Kibzaim with its pasturelands, Beth-horon with its pasturelands—four

cities; **23** and out of the tribe of Dan, Elteke with its pasturelands, Gibbethon with its pasturelands, **24** Aijalon with its pasturelands, Gath-rimmon with its pasturelands—four cities; **25** and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Taanach with its pasturelands, and Gath-rimmon with its pasturelands—two cities. **26** The cities of the clans of the rest of the Kohathites were ten in all with their pasturelands. **27** And to the Gershonites, one of the clans of the Levites, were given out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan with its pasturelands, the city of refuge for the manslayer, and Beeshterah with its pasturelands—two cities; **28** and out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishion with its pasturelands, Daberath with its pasturelands, **29** Jarmuth with its pasturelands, En-gannim with its pasturelands—four cities; **30** and out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with its pasturelands, Abdon with its pasturelands, **31** Helkath with its pasturelands, and Rehob with its pasturelands—four cities; **32** and out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with its pasturelands, the city of refuge for the manslayer, Hammoth-dor with its pasturelands, and Kartan with its pasturelands—three cities. **33** The cities of the several clans of the Gershonites were in all thirteen cities with their pasturelands.

34 And to the rest of the Levites, the Merarite clans, were given out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its pasturelands, Kartah with its pasturelands, **35** Dimnah with its pasturelands, Nahalal with its pasturelands—four cities; **36** and out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with its pasturelands, Jahaz with its pasturelands, **37** Kedemoth with its pasturelands, and Mephaath with its pasturelands—four cities; **38** and out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with its pasturelands, the city of refuge for the manslayer, Mahanaim with its pasturelands, **39** Heshbon with its pasturelands, Jazer with its pasturelands—four cities in all. **40** As for the cities of the several Merarite clans, that is, the remainder of the clans of the Levites, those allotted to them were in all twelve cities.

41 The cities of the Levites in the midst of the possession of the people of Israel were in all forty-eight cities with their pasturelands. **42** These cities each had its pasturelands around it. So it was with all these cities.

43 Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. **44** And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. **45** Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

CH 22 At that time Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, **2** and said to them, “You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you. **3** You have not forsaken your brothers these many days, down to this day, but have been careful to keep the charge of the LORD your God. **4** And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as he promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. **5** Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

6 So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents. **7** Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half Joshua had given a possession beside their brothers in the land west of the Jordan. And when Joshua sent them away to their homes and blessed them, **8** he said to them, “Go back to your tents with much wealth and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and with much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers.” **9** So the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, parting from the people of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, their own land of which they had possessed themselves by command of the LORD through Moses.

10 And when they came to the region of the Jordan that is in the land of Canaan, the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, an altar of imposing size. **11** And the people of Israel heard it said, “Behold, the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built the altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region about the Jordan, on the side that belongs to the people of Israel.” **12** And when the people of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the people of Israel gathered at Shiloh to make war against them.

13 Then the people of Israel sent to the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, **14** and with him ten chiefs, one from each of the tribal families of Israel, every one of them the head of a family among the clans of Israel. **15** And they came to the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, and they said to them, **16** “Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, ‘What is this breach of faith that you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away this day from following the LORD by building yourselves an altar this day in rebellion against the LORD? **17** Have we not had enough of the sin at Peor from which even yet we have not cleansed ourselves, and for which there came a plague upon the congregation of the LORD, **18** that you too must turn away this day from following the LORD? And if you too rebel against the LORD today then tomorrow he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel.’”

19 But now, if the land of your possession is unclean, pass over into the LORD's land where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take for yourselves a possession among us. Only do not rebel against the LORD or make us as rebels by building for yourselves an altar other than the altar of the LORD our God. **20** Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity."

21 Then the people of Reuben, the people of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh said in answer to the heads of the families of Israel, **22** "The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows; and let Israel itself know! If it was in rebellion or in breach of faith against the Lord, do not spare us today **23** for building an altar to turn away from following the LORD. Or if we did so to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings on it, may the LORD himself take vengeance. **24** No, but we did it from fear that in time to come your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? **25** For the Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you people of Reuben and people of Gad. You have no portion in the LORD.' So your children might make our children cease to worship the LORD.

26 Therefore we said, 'Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, **27** but to be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we do perform the service of the LORD in his presence with our burnt offerings and sacrifices and peace offerings, so your children will not say to our children in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD."' **28** And we thought, 'If this should be said to us or to our descendants in time to come, we should say, "Behold, the copy of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you."' **29** Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away this day from following the LORD by building an altar for burnt offering, grain offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his tabernacle!"

30 When Phinehas the priest and the chiefs of the congregation, the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the people of Manasseh spoke, it was good in their eyes. **31** And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the people of Reuben and the people of Gad and the people of Manasseh, "Today we know that the LORD is in our midst, because you have not committed this breach of faith against the LORD. Now you have delivered the people of Israel from the hand of the LORD." **32** Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the chiefs, returned from the people of Reuben and the people of Gad in the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the people of Israel, and brought back word to them.

33 And the report was good in the eyes of the people of Israel. And the people of Israel blessed God and spoke no more of making war against them to destroy the land where the people of Reuben and the people of Gad were settled. **34** The people of Reuben and the people of Gad called the altar Witness, "For," they said, "it is a witness between us that the LORD is God."

Diamonds:

In the sixth commandment (Exodus 20.13) God's law is clear about forbidding killing another person and is also clear about the punishment for murder in Exodus 21.23-25. However, in a fallen world there are horrible circumstances that can lead to the unintentional death of another (manslaughter). In a merciful response, God designed cities of refuge in Deuteronomy 19.1-13. These were to be established once His people entered His promised land. Thus, Joshua is carrying out the order of God, given through Moses.

1. Briefly describe the cities of refuge from Joshua 20. What detail about these cities is most intriguing to you and why?

There are several scholarly thoughts about the meaning and necessity of the death of the high priest allowing amnesty to the "manslayer", the one guilty of manslaughter (not murder). Some do see "typological associations with the death of Jesus Christ", though they acknowledge this is challenged by discussions of sacrifice and atonement. No matter, all agree the provision of a refuge for people to run reveals His mercy and compassion.

2. Chapter 21 is the legal description of the cities of refuge. What do we learn about God's provision in Joshua 21.41-42?

3. What does this teach you about God?
4. List the promises of God found in Joshua 21.43-44.
5. What effect did the fulfillment of “all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel” have on God’s people (V 43-44)? How did it benefit the people that all God’s promises “came to pass” (V 45)?
6. How have you likewise benefitted from God’s fulfillment of “His precious and very great promises” (2 Peter 1.4a)? Try to also include something that has occurred in this past week or very recently in your answer.

Joshua 22 begins the first of three farewell addresses. In chapters 23-24, Joshua gives a final address to the officials, and then to the whole congregation. But here, in chapter 22, Joshua addresses the two and a half tribes that faithfully and diligently served God and His people under Joshua’s commands. They fought alongside their community though they had already been given their allotments, entered, and settled into their portion as God allowed (Numbers 32.20-27; Joshua 1.10-18).

Releasing them from duty, Joshua commends their obedience and service. However, scholars remind us that Joshua 22 is more than just a re-hashing of details. The Bible is also a literary document, full of surprising creativity meant to excite readers into the same emotions, and thoughts, as those experienced by God’s people!

7. Enter the story in Joshua 22 by writing down highlights of the story. What emotions, and thoughts, do you “experience” from each of the highlights of this story?

The “sin at Peor” and the reference to Achan prove that the Israelite community had learned much about God over the years. The backstory to the reference to Peor is found in Numbers 25.1-9, and to Achan’s sin is found in Joshua 7.

8. What do you think God’s people had learned about God? How did their actions, or response, and words in Joshua 22.11-20 provide evidence of their knowledge of God?
9. Joshua 22.26 and 29 provide the key to avoiding calamity. What is the purpose of this additional altar?

10. There are several lessons learned through this story. Choose the final question that is most applicable to your current life stage and/or circumstance:
- There is much to learn about confrontation within the community of God's people in this story. According to Boice, "As Christians we have a chance to show that a combined zeal for truth and love lays the basis for harmony and in the final analysis is the only thing really blessed by God." (p.121). Read 2 Peter 1.5-9. How will you emulate these characteristics, and the lesson learned in this story, as you remain zealous for both truth and love within your church community?
 - The drive behind the second altar was for future generations to avoid future division within God's community. According to Jackman, "The Israelites were determined to deal with the issue because the continued presence of God in their midst was both their greatest blessing and their greatest need." (p. 172) How do you train and build the next generation to remain united with their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ so that they too will highly value the continued presence of God as their greatest blessing and greatest need?

Deity: Our Refuge- Defined as shelter or protection from danger or distress; a place that provides shelter or protection; something to which one has recourse in difficulty. Synonyms are shelter, retreat, asylum, haven, sanctuary, harbor.

Since you are a theologian (see introduction), then you are the best person to write about your God who is your refuge! Use Psalm 91 to anchor your definition and writings. We have provided a variety of Old and New Testament verses that you are encouraged to use to fully develop your knowledge of God as your refuge. Enjoy this time prayerfully growing in knowledge, faith, and theology!

Deuteronomy 32.8-14; Joshua 6.22-25; Proverbs 18.10; Psalm 18.2, 62.7-8; Isaiah 26.3, 28.15-18; Matthew 8.23-27, 14.22-33; John 16.33; 1 Corinthians 10.13; Philippians 4.7; Hebrews 13.5-6. (Freely use additional scripture as you like)

Doctrine: Salvation¹~ defined as to be rescued from calamity, the Biblical use of this word means to be saved from the ultimate calamity, the judgment of God. Salvation is the subject matter of Scripture, and is solely of the Lord, Jesus Christ (John 3.13-21; Romans 1.16-17; 1 Thessalonians 1.10).

¹ Sproul, RC, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 1992) pgs.167-168

Salvation is a divine work accomplished and applied exclusively by God (Ezekiel 36.25-27; Matthew 10.28). "Salvation is both *of* the Lord and *from* the Lord. It is the Lord who saves us from the wrath of the Lord." (Zephaniah 1.7) At the day of judgment, all humans will be held accountable to God before a tribunal of God (Matthew 25.31-46).

This "day of the LORD" will be the darkest hour and worst calamity in human history (Zephaniah 1.2-18). To be delivered from God's wrath is the ultimate salvation. "This is the rescue operation Christ performs for His people as their Savior" (1 Corinthians 1.26-31).

The Bible uses the verb of salvation, to save, in almost every tense of Greek. As such, salvation is us in the past, present, and future:

- God's people were saved from the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1.3-10);
 - God's people were being saved by the work of God in history (Jeremiah 31.34);
 - God's people are saved by being in a justified state (Romans 6.23; Ephesians 2.1-5);
 - God's people are being saved by being sanctified or made holy (James 3.2; 1 John 1.8; 1 Thessalonians 1.6-10);
 - God's people will be saved and experience the consummation of our redemption in heaven (Hebrews 9.23-28).
11. Having agreed to the explanation and understanding of the second altar by the river ("it was good"-Joshua 22.31), Phineas delivers a beautiful statement of salvation in Old Testament terms. How does the people's reaction to this report from verses 33-34 foreshadow how our relationship with God changes when we enter salvation through Jesus?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: God's people rest secure in His great faithfulness.

- I. Secure Place (Joshua 20-21) **T1:** God faithfully provides a safe place for believers to run: Jesus Christ!
 - a. What do you do when the world shakes and your soul quakes?
 - b. When your fight or flight response says, "Take flight!", to whom do you fly?
- II. Sacred Place (Joshua 22) **T2:** God faithfully provides believers all they need to live as His faithful witnesses.
 - a. How has God proven His faithfulness to you?
 - b. In what ways could you give witness to His Almighty power and saving grace?
 - c. How has He been with you in your fight against sin and evil?
 - d. How has He been with you in your flight to safety and security?