

“Irritants & Thorns!”

I. **INTRO:**

- A. **Explain:** Future Wed nights. *Brushing up on the Basics, Series!* (Foundations of the Faith)
- B. **Today 9-9-09:** Some thought it was **mankind’s last day** as 9-9-9 is 666 upside down. Some celebrated it by **getting married** thinking it is a lucky day:
At the 99cent store in Hollywood, 9 couples were married for 99 cents on 9-9-09;
In **Singapore** there were 360 marriages; 500 in **Malaysia**;
A whooping 10,000 in **China** (as **9** = jiu in Mandrin, which means Longevity or Everlasting)
- C. **Pray:** gfhfgh
- D. It’s like a *World Series of weeds*, a *Hula Bowl of herbicides*, with agriculture students from U.S. and Canadian universities competing to identify problems in farm fields. This year, Iowa State took top honors in the **Collegiate Weed Science Contest**, which tests students’ abilities to identify weeds and the right chemical to kill them and diagnose herbicide failure. “They need to be able to recognize weeds when they are **tiny**,” said James Worthington of Western Kentucky University, president of the North Central Weed Science Society. “When they get **big enough** that **anybody can recognize them**, it’s too late to do anything about them.”¹
1. Wow, sounds like **sin**, does it not?

II. **REVIEWING THE PAST! (1-49)**

- A. **FROM EGYPT TO SINAI!** (1-15)
- B. History is *His Story*. It is good to review the past & discern the hand of the Lord at work.
1. God delivered them from Egypt & brought them to Sinai, where they entered a covenant with God.
 2. Israel history meant **knowing why** the past unfolded as it did, so that the present & future could be understood properly.
 - a) Each stop along the way proved God’s **grace, faithfulness, power, & love**.
- C. **FROM SINAI TO KADESH!** (16-36)
- D. Next God brought them to the border of the Promised Land, where they refused to go in.
- E. So really this is a record of *ineffectual marches*. A number of *halting-places*.
1. They recall **journey’s**, that they **never needed to take**.

¹ Spokesman Review, July 27, 1989, p. A9

2. Journey's of criss-crossing the desert back & forth.
3. **Such is the doom of *unbelief***: to effect nothing, to miss the rest of God, & to perish on the threshold of achievement.
 - a) James 1:6 **But let him ask in faith, with *no doubting*, for he who *doubts* is like a wave of the sea *driven* and *tossed* by the wind.**
4. **God has given us in Christ the promise of rest, victory, & satisfaction**; let us enter upon our **inheritance!**

F. **FROM KADESH TO MOAB!** (37-49)

- G. Then the wandered for 40 years & then ended up on the plains of Moab.
 1. **Unbelief means**: wasted **time**; wasted **lives**; wasted **opportunities**.
 2. **But God is gracious & long suffering w/His people.**

III. **ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE!** (50-56)

- A. They needed to create their own (positive) history, & the book of Joshua proves they did just that.
- B. (51) **When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan** - was a word of **promise** (again) & **assurance** that would encourage the nation in their new venture of faith.
- C. (52-54) **God also gave them responsibilities**:
 1. **Drive** out the enemy; **Destroy** the idols; **Dispossess** the people; **& then Divide** the land.
 2. **Mr. Spurgeon once made a parable. He said**, "There was once a tyrant who summoned one of his subjects into his presence, and ordered him to **make a chain**. The poor blacksmith - that was his occupation - had to go to work and **forge the chain**. When it was done, he brought it into the presence of the tyrant, and was ordered to take it away and **make it twice the length**. He brought it again to the tyrant, and again he was **ordered to double it**. Back he came when he had obeyed the order, and the tyrant looked at it, and then commanded the servants to **bind the man hand and foot with the chain he had made and cast him into prison**.
 - a) **That is what the sin does with men.**
 - b) It's like **the wealthy contractor** who had finished building the **Tombs Prison** in *New York*, was found guilty of **forgery** and sentenced to several years in the very prison that he built!
 3. **First you must conquer, then you can claim!**
First the obedience, then the blessing!

- D. **Q:** Why be **so extreme**? Why not just conquer, **without extirpating**(destroying)?
 Why weary ourselves about small points of **moral excellence**?
 Why not enough to **possess** the best of the land, without laboring to **clear all the corners**?
What harm could feeble remnants of heathen do?...Couldn't they make them useful?
1. **Story:** A man purchased a **white mouse** to use as food for his **pet snake**. He dropped the unsuspecting mouse into the snake's glass cage, where the snake was sleeping in a bed of sawdust. The tiny mouse had a serious problem on his hands. At any moment he could be swallowed alive. Obviously, the mouse needed to come up with a brilliant plan. What did the terrified creature do? **He quickly set up work covering the snake with sawdust chips until it was completely buried.** With that, the mouse apparently **thought he had solved his problem.** [We must **clear all corners** not just cover the enemy/sin]
 - a) **The mouse solution, however, came from outside.** The man took pity on the silly little mouse and removed him from the cage. No matter how hard we try to cover or deny our sinful nature, it's fool's work. **Sin will eventually awake from sleep and shake off its cover.** Were it not for the **saving grace** of the Master's hand, sin would eat us alive.
 2. **Christians** should make **no compromise with**, **and show no toleration for**, **what is sinful** and **selfish.**
- E. **A:** When something's **rotten** in your refrigerator, how many of them do you throw away?
 If you don't want your **bread to rise**, how much yeast should you leave out of the dough?
 When you **wash your hands**, do you wash all 10 fingers?
 When you get a **root canal** how much of the puss do you want your dentist to take out?
1. "Ma'am, you have **10 mice** in your attic." Ok, get rid of 8???? **No!**
- F. **Augustine's 3 Stages with Sin:** [1] Lord make me good, **but not yet.** [2] Lord make me good, **but not entirely.** [3] Lord make me good.
- G. We never see **sin** right until we see it as **against God**...All sin is against God in this sense: It is **His law** that is broken, **His authority** that is despised, **His government** that is set at naught.
1. **Pharaoh and Balaam, Saul and Judas** each said, '**I have sinned**'; **but** the returning prodigal said, '**I have sinned against heaven and against you**'; and **David** said, '**Against You, You only, have I sinned.**'
- H. **Irritants** in your eyes & **Thorns** in your side & **Harassed** in the land - they would be constant and dangerous annoyances to them.

- I. No compromise with idolatry:
- J. There must be **no complicity with evil**; for if there be, it will eat out the very heart of our character & happiness.
- K. It is much better to **root out evil** with a strong hand **than** to allow it in any form.
- L. Else like a **boomerang**, our **sinful permissions** will come back on us so quickly
- M. Ask a rancher how a cow gets lost, and chances are he will reply, ‘Well, **the cow starts nibbling** on a tuft of green grass, and when it finishes, **it looks ahead to the next tuft of green grass** and starts nibbling on that one, **and then** it nibbles on a tuft of grass right next to a hole in the fence. **It then** sees another tuft of green grass on the other side of the fence, so it nibbles on that one and then goes on to the next tuft. **The next thing you know, the cow has nibbled itself into being lost.**²
- N. **End:** Mnt Pinatubo in the Philippines, roared back to life after 600 years of quiet slumber
 1. When asked to account for the incredible destruction, caused by this volcano, a **research scientist** from the Philippine department of volcanology observed, “When a volcano is silent for many years, our people forget that it’s a volcano and begin to treat it like a mountain.”
 2. What have you started to treat as only a **mountain** in your life?

² Mike Yaconelli wrote in the Wittenburg Door: