

The Priesthood of Phinehas!

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Yes, Lord, You heard the words of our songs. Father, You said, David said, Lord, that the words of my mouth and the meditation of our heart be acceptable to You this evening. And even now, Lord, even as we spend the next one hour or an hour, Lord, to mediate upon Your Word. I pray, Lord, You speak to our hearts, Lord. Speak to us, Lord. You alone have the Words of life. We want to hear from You, Lord. And the very fact that we have come, Lord, is an act of faith that we want to hear from You. I pray, Lord, that we will be blessed because we came this evening. Speak to our hearts, O Lord. Wash us by the water of Your Words. Sanctify us, separate us, O Father, in a measure this evening, O Lord. Even as we listen the very act of listening and accepting Your Word, let us cleanse us this evening, O Lord. And Your Word, let it not only just cleanse us but let it find a place in our hearts that You would write Your laws in the deep most parts of our inner man and you would cause us to walk in Your ways. Father grant us grace to that end, we pray that You would therefore, anoint, O Lord, the speaking and the hearing of the Word this evening. Speak to us. We praise You. We worship You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

This evening, I just wanted to continue on the topic we've been looking and studying in our Church in the last few weeks. And Wednesdays and Sundays, one verse we looked at last Wednesday – “And such as to do wickedly but the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.” And this kind of has become a matrix in my mind now, it's become like a grid “Know, Be, Do.” And whenever I'll read Scripture, I'll look at Scripture with that grid these days. It's become a part of me so much. And this is what we've been looking at. To know God, the act of knowing God in an intimate relationship causes us to be the way God wants us to be and from that act of knowing and being is what is what comes out from us in terms of service, worship, what have you, that we do mighty exploits for God. The highest premium; therefore, God places upon every one of us is to know Him. That's the highest and the greatest premium.

Jeremiah 9: 23-24

³ Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me...

You see that? That's the premium that what we need to boast. *Romans 3* will talk about that, “where then what becomes of our boasting it is eliminated completely.” Because we don't trust in our works, or anything, we boast only in our knowledge of who God is. T

²⁴ “...that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”

Therefore, the highest premium that God places in every believer's life, in every person's life is the fact that – do we know Him? And we heard last Sunday, last Wednesday especially,

John 17:3

³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

You see that? This is really top priority for God to know Him. And what is this knowing? I read sometime back a book, at least twice I read that book. One of my favorite books in my library is by A.W Tozer. He wrote a book called “The knowledge of Holy.” And this is what he says in one of his chapters, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” It's amazing. What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Who God is for us defines who we are. And look at what he says, he goes on to say, “We tend by a secret law of the soul to gravitate, to move towards our mental image of God. This is true not only for the individual Christian but of a company of Christians that compose the Church.” You see? It's there everywhere; I mean, you go to any Church, any other Church you visit, what they think about God determines how they worship. Their entire life is determined about who and what they understand about God. Therefore, knowing God, first primarily in our minds, so important to God.

Jeremiah 4:22

22 “My people are foolish and do not know me,” says the Lord. “They are stupid children who have no understanding. They are clever enough at doing wrong, but they have no idea how to do right!”

And why is this? Because “They do not know Me.” And therefore, “*They are very clever as to how to do wrong, but they are not very smart how to do right.*” I mean we don’t have to manufacture in ourselves to be sneaky. Right? And it happens at every level. I mean, it doesn’t matter which level you are; that sneaky spirit is there in all of us. And I’ll tell you an example from my life – my bathroom sink got clogged. I didn’t want my landlord to know. So, what I wanted to do was I wanted to sneak in the plumber and sneak out the plumber without him knowing. Otherwise, he will come and sit on my head and say, “What has happened?” And I didn’t want that and I hope he doesn’t listen to this. But I don’t think he would. I didn’t want to tell him. So, I called a plumber. I fixed up an appointment. You know, in the evenings, 6:30 – 7:00, he watches World Cup, thankfully. So, in that time, I wanted to sneak in and sneak out – the plumber. So, that day, divine providence as they say you know, God’s. Jacinth was not keeping too well. So, she said, “Vijay, I am going to sleep early. Just mind the children.” So, she was there in the bedroom. She didn’t want the children to disturb her. And she locked up the bedroom and she asked the children to sleep in the other room. They have a bunk bed. Now, they’re all excited. So, they went and started sleeping. And Abigail woke up. So, plumber called me and I said, “I am coming.” I told Abigail, “Just wait here, baby. Papa is going to come back. Don’t disturb mumma. Just give me 5 minutes. I am going to pick him up. He’s just waiting at the water tank. I am just going to pick him up and come. Don’t be scared. 5 minutes.” She said, “Okay, papa.” I think she has an internal clock to count 300 seconds. So, 301st second, she started crying because I wasn’t back home. So, what did she do? She didn’t want to disturb momma; she went downstairs, and she started crying before the landlord. I mean it was unbelievable, you know. And I thought I was clever enough. I was stupid, right? So, and she started crying before the landlord and the landlord came out and he said, “What is happening, Abigail?” “Papa is not there.” And he says, “Don’t worry, don’t worry.” And behold – papa arrives with the plumber! What did I want to do? I wanted to sneak in the plumber, sneak out the plumber and I said, “My God, Abigail!” And then, you know, I was making the plumber go alongside the landlord, and the landlord said, “Oh, did he come to fix up your bunk bed?” I didn’t hear him and said, “Ah.” I just went upstairs. We’re all very sneaky. We’re all very clever to do what is wrong. But they have no idea what is to do right, see? This is highest priority. I mean, you know this sneaky spirit, by the way, it manifests in Pastors this way. Of course, I am not the senior Pastor, thankfully still. That does not excuse me, I am sorry. I was feeling so guilty after that. I was saying, “Lord, what is this, Lord? What a test, Lord!” Conscience pricking, you know. “What am I doing, Lord?” What kind of an example am I setting for my child. Clever to do what is wrong because we don’t understand the holiness of God. And you know, I understood something about God that day. God doesn’t tolerate tiniest bit of sneakiness in each one of us, He’ll expose us. and we need to know Him, therefore.

Psalm 103:7

7 He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.

You see, the children of Israel were not interested in knowing God but there was only one man who wanted to know Him. They only wanted gifts from God but not interested to know Him at all. But for Moses, it was for a different class was a different breed altogether. He wanted to know Him. And this is what is his prayer.

Exodus 33:13

13...that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight.

You see, we looked at Desert Babies last Sunday, right? Among all the desert babies, of course, we are not talking about desert father. Desert fathers deserted their babies. That is what we heard last Sunday if you heard it. They literally deserted their babies, they didn’t care. And you know what happens to that generation. 600,000 men, it’s actually 600,3550 men. Apart from the Levites, excluding the Levites. 600,3550 men along with children, all these 600,3550 men, only two enter into the Promised Land and the rest of them of these 600,000, they die in the desert. But we know, we heard last Sunday, there were a set of desert children who had circumcision in their hearts, and of course, they had the sign of circumcision before they crossed Jordon. But you know what God was doing? He was looking at these people, these children and he wanted to do something in their lives, you know, He was preparing them. You understood that, right? The same food they eat, the same nourishment, they listened to the same Word, but what happened to the desert fathers and what happened to the desert babies the way they responded is completely different.

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Today, I want to look at two desert babies. Two sets I would say. One is the set and other is an individual. One of my favorite characters in the Bible and I used to look for opportunities to preach them and today, I have the opportunity. It's found in the *Book of Numbers*. I titled today's message, 'The overcomers in the desert'. I want to talk about the setting. It's found in the *Book of Numbers*. By the way, the word 'Numbers' comes from the word – "Bemidhar". What does it mean? "In the wilderness" – that's what it means. I want to give you the entire context of what's going on over here. They come to Sinai, the law is given at Sinai and after that, before they go to the Promised Land, there is censuses which is taken. And after that, you remember, they start moving and Moses sent spies to the Promised Land and spies come back with an evil report two spies, speak a good report and the ten spies instigate the entire congregation against Moses and the leadership and against God. They say, "You know what? Our little children will become captives. You have brought us into the desert, to kill us." God gets frustrated with them and then, He pronounces His judgement, and this is what He says,

Numbers 14:26-32

²⁶The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: ²⁷"How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites.²⁸ So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say:²⁹ In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. ³⁰Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

Only two of the 600,000 men but what happens to the entire next generation. You see, the first generation is completely compromised. And God has pronounced a judgement that these people are not going to enter into Promised Land they are not going to inherit. In our case the life of Christ, they are not going to be overcomers. God already pronounced them, but then He pronounces something on the next generation. Look at what He says,

³¹As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. ³²But as for you, your bodies will fall in this wilderness.

So, already there was a pronouncement, there was a judgment which was pronounced on the compromised generation and God is saying, "This next generation which you said will become fodder for the enemy they will enter, and they will enjoy the land but you'll all die." So, what is going to happen now? You see, the enemy is extremely smart. You know what? He's going to do? He understands that the first generation is useless and they are not going to inherit. So, what he's going to do now, he is going to target the next generation in whatever way, he can so that he can compromise them and he can stop them from inheriting the Promised Land. So, that the first thing he does – after this judgment is pronounced, he instigates rebellion. See, whenever you see rebellion, you need to understand that it's no ordinary thing, it is something which is instigated by the devil himself. And especially, it happens among people who are religious, with a religious spirit. So, this is what happens in *Numbers 16*. And I want to look at two categories of people which is going to be the thrust of my sermon.

Numbers 16:1-2

Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth—became insolent² (Other translations will say they took men)² and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council.

You know, this is like essentially the board of members of the Church. This is equivalent to that. And then, what happens? So, you know the story – they rebel against Moses and Aaron's rod gets banded but then, God pronounces a judgement upon them. He says, "I am going to destroy them, the earth is going to open up and swallow them." This is what happens in *Numbers 16:25* onwards.

Numbers 16:25-27

²⁵Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. ²⁶He warned the assembly, "Move back from the tents of these wicked men! Do not touch anything belonging to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins."²⁷ So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing with (with who?) their wives, children and little ones at the entrances to their tents.

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You see that? Then, one sect of smart intelligent smart children all the sons of Korah. You know psalms of the sons of Korah, remember? Especially the most famous *Psalm, Psalm 84*, which we so famously misquote we think it's the Psalm of David. It is not the Psalm of David; it is the Psalm of Sons of Korah.

...It is better to be a door keeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

In other words, they understand, "My father has been compromised. He is going to die. I don't want to be a part of my fathers' sin." He breaks free and he goes on to the other side. And therefore, *Number 26:10-11* will note this,

Numbers 26:10-11

¹⁰The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them along with Korah,

We know the two people whose who're taken up into heaven, we also see the people who are taken down into the earth. Then, together, when that company died, when the fired devoured and they became a warning. But the sons of Korah, they did not die. What happened? They said, "You know what? This father is not going to influence me in my life." Let me tell you something – Christendom will be full of people especially full of bad examples. Don't ever think all leaders are absolutely fine. No, their faith should not determine your faith. No. I remember 10 years back, I mean this is a part is very close to my heart, and I know the real pain, I as a Church member went through. 10 years back when you know something happened in the previous Church. There was a compromise in the leadership and it broke my heart. It really broke my heart when I came to know the truth. Jacinth and I were absolutely broken and I don't know if any one of you were a part of it. But I went through the traumatic experience. It was traumatic especially for me because I loved that man a lot and I love the Church and I have a friend who actually brought me to Church. He also came to know about it. We made a decision that day, one decided to break from the leader and follow another one and one decided not to follow the other one. He was completely broken and he left fellowship and he went away and I don't even know where he is now.

After I came to this Church, I had mentors and they come at interesting times. We had Shibu visiting us. You know Shibu, right? By this time, you should know Shibu. Shibu was visiting us and I told him about the situation that had happened in the Church and one of my friends who left asked, "What happened to that brother?" I told Shibu, "I don't know. I spoke to him and he is not making a decision." And I remember the words of Shibu, who told to my friend, Kishan. If he is listening, let him listen. He said, "Kishan, you will find a lot of wrong examples but they are not your teachers. You don't have to follow them, Kishan." When he told that, it just liberated my heart. Many of you don't know that. It liberated me and that person is not even there now and I don't even know where he is. It's amazing the guy who actually me to Church is no longer with me. One crucial decision changed the course of our lives. We were in it together actually in the same boat. What it tells me is this in sons of Korah, you don't have to follow bad examples of the people who have compromised, and you don't have to because if you know the truth, if you know God you don't have to follow them. You know it deep down inside your heart that this is the example that I should not follow.

Sons of Korah understood that but the problem here is, not the problem but with the sons of Korah, a bunch of people we don't know their names. Whenever I see names, a bunch of people I don't really get too excited but I get excited when individual takes stands. You see – Daniel is all alone, not all alone but he has got a bunch of Jewish guy who are with him but he is one individual who takes a stand. And you have to because of that one individual, the entire Bible, Exodus from Babylon back to Jerusalem starts with a decision of one guy who says, "I will not defile myself." – One guy. In the midst of a compromised world, he takes a decision not to compromise himself and of course, we have a bunch of three people who get up with him. But do you know something? They get some interesting gifts and talents from God but Daniel gets always something special; he gets a special gift. You know what he gets? He gets a special gift of interpretation of dreams. Why does God have to give him a special gift to him? This fellow, even if others did not take a stand, he had taken a stand and God honors him for that and whenever I see individuals taking decision, that excites me. It also tells me another interesting lesson, the lesson is God is actually interested in individuals. Even though we come and gather as a Body of Christ, we, as a bunch and a set of individuals, God is interested in each and every one of your individual salvation. That is the reason in the first book of Bible is not Genesis chronologically it is the Book of Job because God was looking for one man who would be absolutely blameless before His sight.

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So, the sons of Korah, they all took collectively a decision. But when I look at individuals, there was one individual baby, a desert baby one of my favorite characters in the entire Bible. What's his name? Phinehas! But I want to set the context here. See, the enemy, as I said, is after next generation which he knows we are going to inherit the Promised Land though he incites a rebellion and tries to destroy a part of next generation. A part of them gets destroyed and a part of them makes a decision and comes out, the enemy will not give up.

He says, "You know what? If these fellows, if they continue to walk on this path, they are going to devour me." So, he incites Balak and says, "Come here. Call this fellow, Balaam, and compromise this fellow. I know you give him money, he will do anything; he will say anything that you want. You give him money." So, Balak comes does a song and dance sequence, captures the heart of Balaam and asks him to curse. This fellow Balaam goes to every vantage point possible and only blessings are coming out. Why? See, satan already knows the next generation is compromised. He knows them. Except Joshua and Celeb, and the rest of the guys are not a big problem. Like Pastor says – he killed all the servants and children of Job but left only one person alive and that is the wife of Job. I mean, it's a lesson there. Godly men don't have to have godly wives. Sometimes, he leaves them to incite and therefore, satan is not interested in these fellows who are already compromised. He is interested in next generation. So, what does he do? He calls Balaam and says, "Come on! Curse them," and this fellow goes to every vantage point and only blessing is coming and finally, this is what he says in *Numbers*.

Numbers 23:21

²¹ "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a King is among them.

Therefore, he shuts up and Balaam goes to his home and Balak goes to his house that is how the narrative ends on *Numbers* 24. But then, before he leaves, he gives a very interesting suggestion to Balak. Before I go there, let's follow the narrative from *Numbers* 25 in the NKJV.

Numbers 25:1- 6

¹ Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.

How did Balaam know this? Maybe he was observing from the mountain. He was looking at all the men of Israel saying. I know all these fellows. That's how satan is; he knows our secret life very well. What we do in secret; you think other men don't see but he sees and God sees. In the spiritual realm, nothing is hidden. He understands their weakness, "These fellows know how to lust; they love women." So, what did they do? I like this word.

² They invited (It starts with an invitation) the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel. ⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." ⁵ So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor." ⁶ And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman (he is openly flaunting the girl he is having sexual relationship with) in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

You will understand that there is an idea behind this by the way. This is found in *Numbers* 31:16 which I was actually talking about, the idea which Balaam gave before he departed to his home.

Numbers 31:16

¹⁶ Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord.

You need to understand something that is so interesting that is happening over here. There is idolatry that is taking place and that idolatry is leading to something physical, in the physical realm, the sexual immorality. So, idolatry is leading to sexual immorality. And God is going to speak to us, what is happening. What is going on over here? If you find this in book of *Revelation*. I'll try to explain, what is happening over here, *Revelation* 2, this is New living translation (NLT), verse 12 onwards. *Revelation* 2:12,

Revelation 2:12-14

¹² ***“Write this letter to the angel of the Church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³“I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan’s city.***

So, what has happened? God is commending this Church. He is saying, “You guys were fantastic. You didn’t compromise. Right at the place where Satan’s throne is there and even when one of your Church members was martyred, you stood strong.” But what happens next? Verse 14.

Revelation 2:14

¹⁴ ***“But I have a few complaints against you. (Look at this verse) You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam (or doctrine), who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin.***

Now, let me tell you something – in your fight against sin, there is a sin that you commit, but there is something else which is empowering that sin. How many of you have seen the movie, ‘Ben Hur?’ Not the latest one, the old one. I saw it, N number of times. Love it! This is Ben Hur 1959. You remember the story? I mean, if you haven’t seen the movie, I recommend it to you. We can watch it. Watch it carefully this time.

So, Messala is coming to Judea; he is going to take over the tomb and he’s going to relieve one of the commanders; his name is Sextus. So, he comes to sense this, and the charge is – there is a ceremony that happens; he takes over the charge and takes over the retiring room and the unwind. He asked Sextus, “How is it go on?” He says, “Baba! This province, this is one of the toughest provinces to govern.” And Messala says, “The emperor is not happy. He wants Judea to be a province, which is under the authority of Caesar.” And Sextus complains, he says. “You don’t understand what goes on over here. There is one guy called John the Baptist; there is this guy called Jesus.” So many people, who started inside rebellion and Messala says, “Why don’t you just capture them? Why don’t you arrest them? Why don’t you just put them in prison? Why don’t you just punish them?” And this is what Sextus says, (I like this dialogue) “ You can break a man’s skull, you can arrest him, you can throw him into a dungeon but how do you fight an idea?” Messala, in his characteristic way says: “Sextus, you ask how to fight an idea? Well, I tell you, with another idea.”

So, in your battle against sin, there are two components – there is a sin that you commit and there is an idea behind, the sin which is empowering that sin. So, what you need to do, and this is an incredible insight, which is given to Phinehas. Phinehas observes what is going on over here. And I believe, through Phinehas, God is teaching a lesson to all of us. He wants to overcome sin in his life; he doesn’t want to be part of compromise generation. So, what does he do? In *1 Corinthians 10*, this is what Paul will say,

1 Corinthians 10:14

¹⁴ ***Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.***

1 Corinthians 10:19-21

¹⁹ ***What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?*** ²⁰ ***Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.*** ²¹ ***You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.***

So, what is Phinehas doing? *Numbers 25*, you remember this, *Jeremiah 10:8*,

Jeremiah 10:8

⁸ ***But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine.***

It’s an idea. Behind an idea, there is a doctrine. And behind the doctrine, there is a demon. And he is the one who is inciting the sin. And therefore, if you want to overcome sin? So, how does this guy overcome? So, what does Phinehas do? Phinehas, the son of Eleazar; you see, Moses is sitting and weeping. The elders are sitting and weeping; they are not doing

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anything. That is incredible. One man of God, when he was actually writing a commentary, was saying, “How come Moses was not doing anything about this?” Was he also a compromised? Was he a little lenient, because his wife also was a Midianite woman? It’s amazing. He just shuts his mouth and he is not saying anything. Phinehas says, “Forget about it. If Moses is not doing anything, I am doing something.”

Numbers 25:7-9

⁷Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand;⁸ and he went after the man of Israel (that is the sin) into the tent and thrust (of what?) both of them through, the man of Israel, (did he stop there?) and the woman through her body.(you see you need to kill the sin and the idea that is empowering this.) So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. ⁹And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

How do I know this? How do I know this is an idea? How do I come to this conclusion? You may ask. “Vijay, are you not preaching too much into the text?” Well, I did read too much into the text. I read it into the Hebrew actually. You know whenever the names of particular leaders are given, you need to be careful and analyze what is going on over there. You know the name of this guy and the girl, both are given. So, let’s see, it’s found in *Numbers 25*,

Numbers 25:14-15

¹⁴Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father’s house among the Simeonites. (you see the leadership is absolutely compromised) ¹⁵And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of the people of a father’s house in Midian.

Can you imagine? Think about it, the judgment of God has been pronounced over their lives. They are not entering into the Promised Land. They should have humbled themselves and said, “Okay, Lord! We are not entering into the Promised Land but let us do everything possible so that our next generation enter into the Promised Land.” That’s exactly what David did. God told David, “You cannot build the temple, because you know why? Because, you are a man of blood.” David said, “Hey! Take it easy, God. It’s okay, God. If I won’t build the temple, I am going to do everything possible for my son, so that he can build the temple of the Lord. I am going to teach him, I am going to give him the blue print, I am going to give him the resources. I am going to work hard for my next generation.” That should have been the response, but instead what they did? They absolutely compromised. Their names are given. What do the names mean? I like the names, guy’s name is Zimri, means ‘My Music.’ Ah! That’s interesting, ‘my music’ is the Son of Salu. Exalted music, in other words, my exalted music. But what is your music being empowered by? This is the catch. You know the name ‘Cozbi’ means? ‘My lie,’ that is Cozbi. So, what is happening to an Israelite man? His music is being empowered by a lie. So, it’s not only sufficient to kill the sin. You have to kill the lie that empowers sin and unless you do that not really overcome. Zur means, God of lies. This is the doctrine of Zur, God of lies. Cozbi, who is the daughter of God of lies? Who is the God of lies? She is literally, satan’s daughter. That is exactly the reason why Pastor James keep telling us, “If you marry an unbeliever, you will get satan as your father-in-law, the father of lies, the God of all lies will be your father.” Now, the problem here is this – there are three levels of destructions. How many levels? Level 1 – Destroy the sin. Level 2 – destroy the lie behind the sin. Level 3 – destroy the god behind the lie that empowers the sin. You can't just destroy the idea; you should find against the powers of darkness that empower the sin. That is the reason why it says in,

2 Corinthians 4:4

⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ,

You get blinded. That is what has to be fought. So, *2 Corinthians 10:4* will say,

2 Corinthians 10:4

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

You know something? This is Phinehas whose heart was truly circumcised in the wilderness. That is the reason why he was made a leader. That is what God wanted to protect. Let me tell you something, other people may be responsible for your

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predicament, the sins of other people, sins of other people may be responsible for your predicament, but if you are God's child, *Romans 8:28*; we know that it starts with, I hope you know; you know, not many people can say that,

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Therefore, if God has a call over your life, it doesn't matter what your predicament was because of other people's sins, if you follow God, if you make a decision to follow God, God will still honor you. That is what Phinehas teaches us. This is what it says, in *2 Corinthians 10:5*,

2 Corinthians 10:5

⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

There is a deliberate action that we take to destroy sin.

Coming back to *Numbers 25*; So, the plague was stopped among the children of Israel and those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand men, when there is one man takes the spear and he destroys sin. Now, that is the Old Testament example of what we need to do with our own self.

Romans 8:13-4

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Galatians 5:24

²⁴ And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 6:14

¹⁴ But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by ^[a]whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

There is a deliberate action that we need to take against sin, God empowers us but we also have to be willing. It is not neutral. God does not work in vacuum.

Let's not stop there. Let's learn a second lesson from Phinehas.

Numbers 31:1-5

¹ The Lord said to Moses, ² "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people. ³ So Moses said to the people, "Arm some of your men to go to war against the Midianites so that they may carry out the Lord's vengeance on them. ⁴ Send into battle a thousand men from each of the tribes of Israel." ⁵ So twelve thousand men armed for battle, a thousand from each tribe, were supplied from the clans of Israel."

How many went to war? 12000 men, but who is leading them?

...Moses sent them into battle, a thousand from each tribe, along with Phinehas...

The worship leader. "Can you fight with sword?" "No! But I did fight sin in my life."

...Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, who took with him articles from the sanctuary and the trumpets for signaling....

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Let me tell you the second lesson I learn – if you overcome sin your life consistently constantly, you know what God is going to do? One day, you fought your sin, fought it, never give up, fought it, killed it, fought it with the power of God, you fight sin and God said, “I see you! You know what I’m going to do? I’m going to use you as a leader so that one day, you will be able to fight on the behalf of people who are struggling with sin.” You see, I don’t want to just be a person who overcame sin and just - - when Peter would come to me and say, “Vijay, how did you overcome sin?” I’ll say, “You know what? I have an experience with God. This is what I did.” Like Pastor said, “What a joy of victory is, the high adrenaline pumping that you get when you see that you have overcome.” O boy! He said top rank adrenaline pumping, right? That’s exactly what I experienced in my own life, when I was the university first, heart pumping and when go and see the results like my parents used to get frustrated with me. I said, “Mama, when are the results coming “Vijay, the results will come,” but you know what? I knew that I performed well, I wanted to get good marks, I was not interested in number one, number two, number three. I used to go every day to the examination board in OU, our famous college. Do you know how the adrenaline pumps when you know that you have victory? And you said, “You know what? I did it, man! And what I did, you can do too!” Why? Because we worship the same God. God is not a respecter of persons. He has no partiality; He doesn’t show partiality and if you are willing and obedient, you can defeat the sin the way I defeated sin. That is the reason why Jesus was called Joshua the Captain of our salvation because He was made perfect through sufferings, He was tempted in every area, tested and He overcame and because He is able to overcome, He said, “You know what? I understand what you are going through and because I overcame, you will also overcome.” See, that is what is happening over here – there is one guy who is not satisfied just to overcome sin in his life; he is saying, “Lord, what you did to me, I want to share with other brothers and sisters who are going through the same problem – same sin, same struggle, I want to tell them, ‘You know what did for me, He can do to you too.’” I fought it and fought it by the power of God and the same power of God is available to you and we can all become overcomers and that is the reason why satan is after Phinehas here. See, there are two Phinehases in the Bible, by the way. One Phinehas is an overcomer. In the same area, one Phinehas is an absolute compromiser. So, when some people name their sons Phinehas, I need to ask them, “Which one?” I remember when Phinehas who comes to our school came to our office and I ask the child, “What’s your name, dear?” He said, “Phinehas.” And I said, “You are the second guy I am hearing who has that name Phinehas and then, recently in the Pastors’ Conference, there is one guy; his name is also Phinehas. I hope he’s not the second one. Which one, second Phinehas, he become the leader. Are you interested in leading other people? That is the reason why, when you teach you learn and you learn when you teach. When you teach other people how to overcome, you overcame in the same area, you prove God in that area, you know what men, God is looking for men and women who have proven God in their secret lives. Do you want to be among them, do you want to be a Phinehas who is going to lead other people, who is going to take revenge on the Midianites? And what does this guy do? Pastor said, right? The taste of victory, call all the five kings and put them under your feet. This is exactly what is happening over here.

Numbers 31:8

⁸ ***They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.***

Who was the father of Cozbi? The lie. What is he doing? He is not only fighting the sin, he is not only fighting the lie; he is fighting the demonic power that empowered the lie *because we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities ad powers of darkness*. He goes and kills them, who is leading that? Phinehas. I should have titled the message, “The Priesthood of Phinehas”. They also killed Balaam. You see, they killed the Balaam, the fellow who actually caused the ideology. What it tells me is this, my dear brothers and sisters, you have the right to choose which doctrine to subscribe to. You can choose to kill the doctrine which will not empower you to overcome sin in your life and I go everywhere. I’m not boasting about my Church; you know I missed Church last Sunday, really. I believed I was the first person who heard the message and I heard it at one-and-a-half-time speed because I said I want to listen to it fast. I missed it. There are very few places on earth where you are challenged to overcome sin, where you are taught as to how to fight sin. That is the reason why it says, the guy who is cleansed of his demons, one demon has got out, what has happened? Seven other demons. This is the reason why we constantly ask you, come sit under the Word of God, let the truth of the Word of God take out every lie and every demonic oppression from your heart. It is a constant battle every day of your lives. You choose it deliberately to fight sin. And they killed Balaam; this is revenge. So, let me come back to this verse. This is the depth of what we call repentance. It says in *2 Corinthians 7:11*,

2 Corinthians 7:11

¹¹ For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

You know what God told Moses? “Go and take revenge on the Midianites!” You know people take revenge on one another but they don’t take revenge against the devil but God said, “You have power to thwart every power of the demonic world. I have given you the power, they will not be able to overcome you but instead people are fighting flesh and blood, taking people to court and that too before the Gentiles.” Like we heard last Sunday about Lot – whenever you have feelings of revenge against another person, you need to understand you are fighting flesh and blood. If husband and wife are fighting, they are not fighting demons; they are fighting flesh and blood. Let’s move on but the problem is, it doesn’t stop here, right? Look at what it says in *Numbers*; this is a very stubborn sneaky spirit by the way.

Numbers 31:8-9

⁸ They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword. ⁹ And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive,

They captured the Midianite women again. Who is heading you? It sounds very typical. It’s like Saul, when he was asked to kill the Amalekites, he killed everybody except the best of the flock and Agag, something similar is happening over here. In that, he just left the Midianite woman, why are you again subscribing to lies.

Numbers 31:10-18

¹⁰ All their cities in the places where they lived, and all their encampments, they burned with fire, ¹¹ and took all the spoil and all the plunder, both of man and of beast. ¹² Then they brought the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the people of Israel, at the camp on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. ¹³ Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the chiefs of the congregation went to meet them outside the camp. ¹⁴ And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. ¹⁵ Moses said to them, “Have you let all the women live?

You see how subtle this is.

¹⁶ Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord. ¹⁷ Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. ¹⁸ But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves.

What it tells me is this – there is never a point in your life when you stop fighting lies. You can never relax. The Midianite women are always there even if you thought that you kill them. Lies are ideas. You can kill a person but how can you kill an idea? You can kill Marx but you cannot kill Marxism. You can kill Mao but you cannot kill Maoism. They will come in their packaged form and they will again look very beautiful and attractive. So, one of the lessons Phinehas learns, “My tentacles and my antenna always have to be sharp and I have to constantly keep asking God for the spirit of discernment. I can never relax in this battle against sin because sin in its subtle variance will always try to keep enticing. That is the reason why it says in the *Book of Luke* after Jesus is tempted. Satan tempted Jesus, how many times? Three times. And it says after He overcame him three times, that satan left Him for an opportune moment. He came and he left Him for an opportune moment. So, you cannot just ever relax. See, that is the reason why there is nothing called relaxing in Christendom. I mean spiritually speaking. You can relax physically possibly or you can even relax mentally and in your soul but you can never relax in the spirit. You can never stop thinking actually. You know that is the reason why we have parks called amusement parks. Do you know what amusement park means? Muse means to think; amuse means – don’t think. So, when you go to Wonderla, you have entered into a ‘Don’t think park’ where you can let your guard down. Relax, nobody is watching. That’s exactly what happened to me the one time I went to Wonderla. It was very interesting how God captures you in the swimming pool. I was swimming and I was enjoying, all people over there swimming and while I was swimming I hit somebody and that person got up like that and he said, “Praise the Lord, Pastor.” I said, “Who is this fellow?” And he said, “Remember you came to Warangal to our Church to preach?” Then, I recognize why it is called amusement park and God

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does not want me to stop thinking because one fellow will be there who knows me and if I'm caught in some compromised, embarrassing position, he will say, "Praise the Lord, Pastor." I'm telling you, honestly, after that, I didn't want to go to Wonderla. Seriously, honestly, you don't know how Hyderabad has changed, how Hyderabad has changed in fifteen years, a decade and a half. It's become sometimes, in some place worse than Canada. And by the way, the Maple leaf has been replaced by the Marijuana leaf. I spoke in some cryptic language. Phinehas learnt that lesson that he can never ever stop being on guard against sin. He has to have his spiritual antennae always tuned to God. Does he therefore learn his lesson? Let's check him out please. *Joshua 22* now, interesting, we are following Phinehas in his journey

Joshua 22:1-17

¹ At that time Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh,

Who are these people? These are the people who said, "We want to be on the other side of Jordan. We like the place over here. We like the land over here. We don't want to cross onto Jordan." And Moses said, "Fine. Take it but all the men you go, cross Jordan, fight for your brothers and once your brothers find rest, go back and enjoy your possessions. Otherwise, be sure your sin will find you out." Where do you find that? *Numbers 32:23*; it is easy to remember. So, they said, "Okay, fine!"

¹ 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."

That is one sermon in itself. I'm not going to go into the depths of that. Five things he talks about and then, they said, "Okay, fantastic."

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.

In other words, they were crossing Jordan and before they crossed off Jordan, they built an imposing altar there,

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."

Not on their side but on the Israelite side,

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.

Now, who is going to lead them? You might have guessed it!

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,

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He understands. He says, "I want to be sure that every vestige of sin in my life is broken. I don't even want to give chance to anything even if it looks not sinful, even if it is not sinful my antenna will always be sharp. You know what they say, "Hey relax Phinehas. Do you know why we build this altar? We build this altar as a memorial not to break faith with God and he gives them an answer, he understands the answer, he understands that it is a satisfactory answer, and he goes back and tells his people, "It's okay." What does it tell me? He is sharp. You know, you might fall in one area in your life once but after you have overcome, you have to be sharp, that is the reason why it says, "Abstain from every appearance of evil." Abstain from it. Boy! Does Phinehas not teach us lessons? One guy who was a desert baby, a baby to a young man who overcomes the devil, to a father who is concerned about his flock. You see the desert baby becoming a desert a father. You see, the grid is in my mind, I love it. Know, be, do.

Finally, we'll end with this promise. *Psalm 106.*

Psalm 106:28-30

²⁸ Then they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead; ²⁹ they provoked the Lord to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them. ³⁰ Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed.

This was credited to him. Abraham believed in God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Phinehas overcame sin and the lies and the devil and it was credited to him as righteousness. Do you want to be a Phinehas? Oh boy, when I read Phinehas, I get excited. I was looking for opportunities to share. One guy who was a desert baby. You know, when Pastor gave the title 'desert babies', I was actually excited. I knew on the top of my head, I said, "Sons of Korah, Phinehas," this was coming into my mind. Two desert babies who overcame in the desert and from children they became young men and then to fathers. You want to be Phinehas in your generation! If you want, let's all stand up and pray.

Closing Prayer

Father God, we thank You, Father, for this time that You gave to us, Lord, O Father. Father, You come right on time for Your children. We are going through some incredible, interesting times in our Church, Lord. We know it. We sense it in our spirit; shifts happening in the spiritual realm and even as we have been exhorted to position ourselves to receive the anointing, I pray, Father, that You would find young men, young women, older men, older women in this Church and my heart's desire is that every one of us will strive to enter through that narrow gate so that we can position ourselves to receive the anointing that Phinehas received to fight sin, to fight lies and to fight the demons. Grant us grace to that end, we pray, as a Church, Lord. Father, You said, Lord, that You are not looking for numbers; Father, You are able by few or with many; You are not constrained. It is our privilege, O Lord, to be used of You and to be used by You and, Lord, we are been given this incredible opportunity in this Church and I pray, Father that none of us will squander that because of our unbelief and because of compromise, grant us grace to that end we pray that You would find genuine men and women, young man, young women, young children in this congregation who will be Phinehases in their generation and there is a plague, O Lord, a plague of sin which is just like cancer, it is just spreading like cancer in this world and I pray, Lord, that You would find Phinehases in this Church who would stand up, resist the devil and will stop the plague from spreading, this plague of sin in this generation. May you find Phinehases after Your own heart in this sanctuary this evening. Grant us desire and grace to that end we pray. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.