

Forward: Claiming the Life God Gave You
Joshua 13:8-21:45 Part 1
The Danger of Insubordination Toward God

Introduction: Insubordination is when a person refuses to follow the instructions of the one in authority over them. When it comes to God's authority over us you would think insubordination would never enter our minds. He is not only the all-knowing and all-powerful Holy God who can issue unavoidable and irrevocable consequences, but He is also the God of mercy and grace who has given us every positive reason to not live that way! When we live our lives in submission to Him, we also live our lives in the experience of His life. Therefore, living subordinate to Him rather than insubordinate is the only reality that makes any sense at all.

With that, it's truly crazy how we start finding ways to disobey direct commands of God when they are no longer convenient for us to obey. It makes no logical sense how we rationalize that there's nothing wrong with what God said is wrong because a world living in rebellion to Him thinks its tolerable. It's crazy how very clear commands of God on what we are to do, that come to us with massive emphasis in the Scripture, get set aside as options for us to do if we feel like it—things like loving others as He loves us, forgiving others, sharing the Gospel, being relationally engaged with others in a local church, financially supporting the work of the ministry, etc. Things like these are so clearly taught in Scripture that to suggest God hasn't commanded us to do them is the equivalent of saying there is no moon orbiting the earth.

When it comes to the Jewish people living under the leadership of Joshua, there wasn't a single one of them that could say they were ignorant of God's authority and instructions. The Bible records that Moses personally taught the people the Law (Deuteronomy 31:1) and we know that on at least one occasion Joshua personally taught the people as well (Joshua 8:34-35). However, as big as the Mosaic Law is, one might argue that the average person could easily forget some of the things he or she was supposed to do and as such are not guilty of intentional insubordination, but rather innocent disobedience. The Mosaic Law itself actually acknowledges this reality and sets up a way for the reconciliation of that disobedience (Hebrews 9:7). However, there were a few things that were so emphasized and so prominent that to not obey them could never be considered innocent or ignorant. For instance, not only did God give very clear instructions on how the Israelites were to conquer and claim the land He gave them, but He had also made it abundantly clear why! In Deuteronomy we read,

16 But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, 17 but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, 18 that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 20:16-18)

Therefore, to allow the Canaanites to live in the land God had given them was not only insubordination of the most obvious nature, but it was also a total disregard of why God said to do it. Let me explain. The first and most obvious command to all of Israel was,

4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Disobeying this Law in any way is the most basic and obvious testimony of insubordination towards God, but to move from passively not loving God to actively worshiping other gods is the most heinous form of insubordination possible. The Mosaic Law emphasizes the extreme nature of this kind of insubordination with some of the most severe responses in all the Bible. Moses taught,

6 "If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which neither you nor your fathers have known, 7 some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, 8 you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him. 9 But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. 10 You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Deuteronomy 13:6-10)

Worshiping false gods is complete insubordination of the worst kind and as such it requires the harshest possible penalty from God. Now understand, pagan worship was highly appealing to the desires of the flesh. Somehow drunkenness and illicit sex always seemed to end up being a part of it. It was very appealing to tell a person drunk or sober, they could fulfil all their sexual desires and earn blessings from a deity in the process. So do you understand why then God told the Jewish people to leave no living Canaanite in the land? To leave the Canaanites and their abominable religious practices in the land would be like placing land mines in your own house and hoping nobody accidentally stepped on one of them! It makes no sense at all! If that doesn't make it clear to you why God said to drive the Canaanites out, then I don't know what does!

Therefore, with instructions as clear as God made them, and with the emphasis God underscored them with, you would think there would be no way in the world Israel would justify not following them. But as we read through the seven chapters in Joshua that lay out which tribes inherited which lands, we find a stunning and repetitive reality.

Four Examples of Israel's Insubordination Toward God

Proposition: In Joshua 13:8–21:45 there are four different examples of Israel's refusal to obey the command to rid the land of the Canaanites.

The first example is seen in Joshua 13:12-13.

(1) The eastern tribes failed to obey God and drive out the Geshurites and the Maacathites. (13:12-13)

- A. 12 all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (he alone was left of the remnant of the Rephaim); these Moses had struck and driven out. 13 Yet the people of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites, but Geshur and Maacath dwell in the midst of Israel to this day. (Joshua 13:12-13)
- B. Whenever the final edit was done on the book of Joshua, the Israelites on the east side of Jordan still had not done what God had told them to do.
- C. “13:12 the Rephaim The Hebrew term here, *rephaim*, is used in the ot for giant clans and the spirits of those fallen warriors in Sheol (Isa 14:9).”¹
- D. “**Giant Clans in the Old Testament** Several Old Testament passages refer to “giants” and “races of giants.” **The Nephilim** The first mention of giant clans in the Old Testament appears in Genesis 6:1–4. This passage seems to describe how, prior to the flood, the “sons of God” cohabited with the “daughters of men.” The results of this union were the Nephilim. Given Genesis 6:4’s use of “sons of God,” a phrase used elsewhere for divine beings, this passage appears to describe the union of divine and human beings and their offspring: the nephilim (giants). This was the predominant view of ancient Judaism and the earliest Christians. It is also presupposed in the New Testament (2 Pet 2:4, Jude 6). While the sons of God, and their offspring, may have simply been mortals, the term Nephilim also occurs in reference to unusual height elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Num 13:33). In the book of Numbers, 10 of the 12 spies sent out by Moses to survey the promised land came back with disappointing news that the people there are of great height and that the Nephilim—who are also called the sons of Anak—made them feel like mere grasshoppers (Num 13:32–33). **The Anakim, Emim, and Zamzummim (Zuzim)** Near the end of the wilderness wanderings, God instructed Moses to approach the promised land from the east side of the Jordan river (the Transjordan). The giants whom the spies had feared 40 years earlier lived in the Transjordan, but God had providentially eliminated them. If they trusted Him, God would provide for Israel again. And so we passed by our brothers, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, past the road of the Arabah, from Elath and Ezion Geber, and we turned and traveled along the route of the desert of Moab. And Yahweh said to me, ‘You shall not attack Moab, and you shall not engage in war with them, for I will not give you any of his land as a possession; I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.’ (The

¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Jos 13:8–13). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Emim previously lived in it, a people large, numerous, and tall, like the Anakites. They were reckoned also as Rephaim as the Anakites were; but the Moabites called them Emim. The Horites previously lived in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from among themselves, as Israel did with respect to the land of their possession that Yahweh gave to them.) ... Yahweh spoke to me, saying, 'You are about to cross over the boundary of Moab today at Ar. When you approach the border of the Ammonites, you shall not harass them, and you shall not get involved in battle with them, for I have not given the land of the Ammonites to you as a possession; because I have given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession. (It is also considered the land of Rephaim; Rephaim lived in it previously, and the Ammonites called them Zamzummim, a people great and numerous and as tall as the Anakites; Yahweh destroyed them from before them, and they dispossessed them and settled in place of them (Deut 2:8–12; 17–21). This passage indicates that the Emim and the Zamzummim, inhabitants among the Moabites and Ammonites, had populated the Transjordan in the days of Esau, well before the Israelites became slaves in Egypt. The passage describes the Emim as tall as the Anakim (Deut 2:10), counted as Rephaim (Deut 2:11). The term "Rephaim" is also used of the Zamzummim, who were likewise as tall as the Anakim (Deut 2:21). **The Rephaim** The reference to the Rephaim in Deuteronomy 2 is broadly associated with giantism throughout the Old Testament. Deuteronomy introduces other giants: Sihon, king of Heshbon (Deut 2:26–30), and Og, king of Bashan (Deut 3:1), both of whom ruled the Amorites (Deut 3:2, 8). Deuteronomy 3:11, which describes the size of Og's bed, links him to the Anakim by way of the Rephaim. In addition, Amos 2:9–10 describes the defeat of "the Amorite," whose "height was like the height of cedars." The kingdoms of Sihon and Og were in the region of Bashan and Mount Hermon (Ashtaroath and Edrei; see Deut 1:4; 3:1, 10; Josh 12:1–4; 13:12). This location had a demonic or otherworldly association in the ancient Near East among the Ugarit peoples. A number of ancient Jewish, extrabiblical books identify Mount Hermon as the place where the "sons of God" descended to cohabit with human women as described in Genesis 6:1–4. The association of these Rephaim with the Nephilim was therefore well known. The Rephaim—and the other giant clans of Deuteronomy 2—were also part of the Old Testament in earlier periods: When Abraham went out to battle to save Lot, his opponents had dispatched with several of the clans associated with giantism (see Gen 14:5). **The Philistines** Goliath the Philistine is the most famous giant mentioned in the Bible. Goliath was from Gath (1 Sam 17:23). Joshua 11:21–22 informs us that Gath was one of the places where the Anakim survived after the time of Joshua and Moses. First Chronicles 20:4–6 also may link Goliath to the Rephaim, as the mention of "Rapha" may refer to the Rephaim (1 Chr 20:6). **Giantism in Perspective.** Skeletal remains recovered from the biblical period show that the average male height was slightly less than five feet and five inches, with women being slightly shorter. Great height was unusual. The average height in modern times is much taller because of better nutrition, longer life spans, and medical advances. While the traditional Hebrew text of the David and Goliath story has Goliath at six cubits and one span (six foot and six inches tall; 1 Sam

17:4), the Hebrew text followed by the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament) has Goliath at four cubits and one span (six feet and six inches tall). Since the Dead Sea Scrolls' text of 1 Samuel also reads "four," Goliath was likely six feet and six inches tall. But Goliath and his fellow giants would have still been enormous compared to the average height of a man in the biblical period. Michael S. Heiser"²

The second example is seen in Joshua 15:63.

(2) Judah and Benjamin both failed to drive out the Jebusites. (15:63)

- A. 63 But the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the people of Judah could not drive out, so the Jebusites dwell with the people of Judah at Jerusalem to this day. (15:63)**
- B.** Joshua only mentions Judah's failure, but in Judges 1:21 we find out the tribe of Benjamin is responsible for this failure as well. Judah was apparently the tribe that was first given the responsibility of eliminating the Jebusites, but it clearly eventually became the Benjamites responsibility because they inherited the city of Jerusalem.
- C.** "1:21. **Jerusalem** was located on the boundary between Judah and Benjamin. Following Judah's partial and/or temporary victory at Jerusalem (v. 8), **the Jebusites**, who could not be dislodged by **the Benjamites**, continued to dwell on the fortified southeast hill until the time of David (2 Sam. 5:6-9). **The Jebusites** were the Canaanite inhabitants of the city also known as Jebus (Jud. 19:10-11)."³
- D. "Status Report on the South (Judg 1:19-21)** Whatever success Judah had in clearing the hill country of Canaanites was due to the presence of Yahweh. The Judahites, however, did not fare well against the inhabitants of the lowlands to the west because they had "*iron chariots*" (1:19). Why was Yahweh unable to help them in the lowlands? The problem was that (1) Judah did not press the initial advantage in the lowlands; and (2) failed to settle the areas which had been conquered. Benjamin did even worse. They did not follow up on the initial Judahite victory over Jerusalem. The Jebusites returned, and the Benjaminites made no effort to drive them out. At the time the Book of Judges was written the Jebusites were still living "*with the sons of Benjamin*" in Jerusalem (1:21)."⁴
- E.** "This furnishes no excuse for the people, nor is it set down with that view; for had they exerted themselves to the full measure of their strength, and failed of

² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

³ Lindsey, F. D. (1985). [Judges](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 380). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Smith, J. E. (1995). [The Books of History](#) (p. 123). Joplin, MO: College Press.

success, the dishonour would have fallen on God himself, who had promised that he would continue with them as their leader until he should give them full and free possession of the land, and that he would send hornets to drive out the inhabitants. Therefore, it was owing entirely to their own sluggishness that they did not make themselves masters of the city of Jerusalem. This they were not able to do; but their own [apathy], their neglect of the divine command from a love of ease, were the real obstacles. This passage is deserving of notice: we ought to learn from it to make vigorous trial of our strength in attempting to accomplish the commands of God, and not to omit any opportunity, lest while we are idly resting the door may be shut. A moderate delay might have been free from blame; but a long period of effeminate ease in a manner rejected the blessing which God was ready to bestow.”⁵

The third example is seen in Joshua 16:1-10

(3) Instead of driving the people out, Ephraim disobeyed God and put the people of Gezer into forced labor. (16:10)

- A. **10 However, they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites have lived in the midst of Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor. (16:1-10)**
- B. A few weeks ago, when we studied Joshua 9, we learned all about what happened with the Gibeonites. In doing so we looked at Deuteronomy 20:15-16. In it, the Law made it real clear the Israelites could place people outside of Canaan into forced labor if they surrendered instead of fighting. However, the Law was very clear that this provision did not apply to the Canaanites. The Canaanites were to be completely removed from the Promised Land. So once again, this is nothing short of total insubordination to God’s authority.
- C. “But the men of Ephraim, like those of Judah, did not completely drive out the Canaanites from their region. Motivated by a materialistic attitude, they chose to put the Canaanites in Gezer under tribute to gain additional wealth. That proved to be a fatal mistake for in later centuries, in the time of the Judges, the arrangement was reversed as the Canaanites rose up and enslaved the Israelites. In addition to the historical lesson there is a spiritual principle here. It is all too easy for a believer to tolerate and excuse some pet sin only to wake up some day to the grim realization that it has risen up to possess and drive him to spiritual defeat. It pays to deal with sin decisively and harshly.”⁶

The fourth example is seen in Joshua 17:12-18

⁵ Calvin, J., & Beveridge, H. (2010). *Commentary on the Book of Joshua* (pp. 209–210). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

⁶ Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Joshua*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 358–360). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

(4) The western tribe of Manasseh not only disobeyed God and put the Canaanites on their lands into forced labor but they lacked the faith to fight them. (17:12-18)

A. 12 Yet the people of Manasseh could not take possession of those cities, but the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land. 13 Now when the people of Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out. (17:12-13)

B. “Apparently it was considered necessary for military purposes that these cities be held by a strong tribe. The decision, however, was in vain for the sons of Manasseh, like the Ephraimites, chose tribute over triumph.”⁷

C. The nature of their insubordination becomes clear as you continue to read through Joshua 17. The writer records the people of Joseph, which in this case is the tribe of Ephraim and the western tribe of Manasseh, came to Joshua with a very revealing complaint.

D. 14 Then the people of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, although I am a numerous people, since all along the LORD has blessed me?" 15 And Joshua said to them, "If you are a numerous people, go up by yourselves to the forest, and there clear ground for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you." 16 The people of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us. Yet all the Canaanites who dwell in the plain have chariots of iron, both those in Beth-shean and its villages and those in the Valley of Jezreel." 17 Then Joshua said to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, "You are a numerous people and have great power. You shall not have one allotment only, 18 but the hill country shall be yours, for though it is a forest, you shall clear it and possess it to its farthest borders. For you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong." (17:14-18)

1. They wanted land they didn't have to fight to take. But, besides their self-centered request, they started talking like the people of Israel did when the twelve spies came back and ten of them gave a cowardly faithless report to Moses. They let the strength of the enemy overcome their faith in the strength of God; the God who had given them nothing but victory in the face of constant overwhelming odds. The most insubordinate thing we can ever do to God is to stop trusting Him!

⁷ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Joshua](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 360). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

2. “The Canaanites who lived in the valley of Jezreel possessed “*chariots of iron.*” Perhaps the Josephites expected some kind of favoritism from Joshua since he was of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua, however, would not budge. He repeated their own boasts to them. They were a numerous people. They needed more land. So take the hill country, he charged, and drive the Canaanites out. If they would only assert themselves they would have all the land they needed in spite of the iron chariots of their enemies (17:14–18).”⁸

3. “The lack of faith’s obedience ultimately undermined Israel’s spiritual commitment and led to Israel’s inter-marriage with the Canaanites and to their undoing (see Dt. 7:1–6; 12:29–31; Jdg. 3:1–6). The request and failure of the people of Joseph at the end of the section on the early allotments (17:14–18) contrasts sharply with the request and success of Caleb of Judah at the beginning (14:6–15; Jdg. 1:27–28). The peoples of Joseph complained that their allotment was too small; Joshua responded that their faith was too small. ... Their claim that *The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the plain have iron chariots* (16) exposed their spiritual failure: sloth, timidity and lack of vision. Joshua replied with the confidence of faith: *clear [the forested hill country] and drive out [the Canaanites]* (17–18).”⁹

4. “In regard to the plain, which was cultivated and fertile, they object that they are shut out and debarred from it because of the formidable array of the enemy. Accordingly, they make mention of their iron chariots, as if they had not already learned by experience that the Lord was able, without any difficulty, to trample down both horses and chariots. ... The inheritance is yours; do only your part by entering with due confidence on the possession of it”.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

The Terrible Consequence Of Israel’s Insubordination Toward God Was That They Never Truly Enjoyed The Prosperity God Offered Them.

Listen to what happens in Judges 2.

1 Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, 2 and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done? 3 So now I say, I will not drive them out

⁸ Smith, J. E. (1995). *The Books of History* (pp. 102–103). Joplin, MO: College Press.

⁹ Waltke, B. K. (1994). *Joshua*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 254). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

¹⁰ Calvin, J., & Beveridge, H. (2010). *Commentary on the Book of Joshua* (p. 221). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you." ... 11 And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. 12 And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. 14 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. 15 Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress. (Judges 2:1-3, 11-15)

The result of leaving the people in the land that God told Israel to remove from it was that God eventually disciplined them for their disobedience and no longer aided them in their removal. As such, the Israelites eventually began to worship the idols and participate in pagan practices that not only disenfranchised them from living in the blessings of God, but also brought some of the harshest possible judgements of God. This was a cycle Israel never broke even after God graciously restored them from Babylonian captivity, and it was all because of the insubordination of the people of Israel when they insubordinately refused to drive out the Canaanites from the land God gave them. A soon as God divided up the land and gave it to them to live on, they stopped doing one of the most fundamental things God clearly told them to do in order to live on it with His blessings—rid the land of the Canaanites.

The reality of their insubordination towards God became clear after Joshua's death. To me, nothing is sadder than a wasted opportunity, especially when there is no logic at all on why a person would waste it.

Universal Biblical Truth: When we are insubordinate towards God, we are simultaneously choosing sin and its experience as our reality.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:28-32)

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit ... 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who

[practice] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:16-17a, 19-21)

The point is that you can't experience God's life while living insubordinately towards Him. The fruit of insubordination is the reality of insubordination—sin! God's life is only available when we are living in Him, therefore when we choose to live insubordinately towards Him, we are choosing to live outside of the experience of His life. God's life is described by joy, peace, perseverance, self-control, wisdom, endurance, victory and all sorts of realities that we all long to describe our life, but none is bigger than love! God is love, and when we are in Him that reality is the chief descriptive of our reality.

Challenge: Are you rationalizing your insubordination towards God because there doesn't seem to be any negative consequences for it at this time, or are you actively combatting it so that you can live in the experience of His life?

Today, for the 4th year in a row I started an annual ten-day treatment to address pre-cancerous skin cells on my head, neck and face. It's a topical chemotherapy that functions as a marker for my immune system. Instead of attacking cancerous and pre-cancerous cells it essentially attaches itself to those cells, and as such, marks them as something my immune system will no longer allow in my body. Over the next ten days my immune system will destroy every cell this chemo attaches itself to—it's an incredible advancement in medicine!

Now, some hear the word precancerous and say, well it's not cancer yet so why worry about it? The answer is because precancerous cells are cells that will eventually turn to cancer. It's not if they will, just when they will; and you don't know when and you may not even realize when. For instance, with some of my past treatments the Doctor felt like the severity of the reaction in some of the places on my head and neck indicated they were likely already past the precancerous stage and into the cancerous stage even though outwardly they didn't appear to be at that stage prior to the treatment.

However, regardless of what stage those cells were, there is no doubt that I have precancerous skin cells and if I don't get rid of them I will absolutely with 100% certainty end up with skin cancer. Therefore, there is no logical option but to attack the precancerous cells and get rid of them. I have two choices. I can do the treatment and possibly never get skin cancer, or I can choose not to do the treatment and be guaranteed to end up with a cancer that can spread to all kinds of other places in my body.

Now with all that, here's something that's truly crazy to me. Unless that topical chemo marks those cells for my immune system to kill them, my immune system won't do it. Now how stupid is that! Why does my immune system need an outside agent to tell it to kill something that's trying to kill me? I mean, isn't that the very purpose of the immune system, that is, isn't the purpose of our immune system to attack things in us that threaten us? But the nature of cancer is that our immune system won't do its job. It lets cancer cells multiply and spread all over our body.

I'm not a medical doctor so that's as far as my explanation can go, but it illustrates the nature of insubordination in our life.

Earlier in Joshua 7 we learned the story of Achan. Achan took things from Jericho that God declared as "cherem," that is, belonging to Him for His purposes alone. He hid those items in his tent with the presumption he had gotten away with it. Even though it had been made abundantly clear that God said not to take those things, Achan did it anyway. Given nothing negative happened to him since Jericho, you could imagine Achan was thinking he had gotten away with it; that living insubordinately towards God was no big deal. Like my immune system that won't go attack these precancerous cells on their own, Achan felt no need to address what he had done, that is, until 3,000 of his brothers went off to battle and got embarrassingly defeated by what would be called a "cupcake" team in the college football world (a team that should be easily defeated). Achan had to have been thinking his insubordination wasn't that big of a deal, but when 36 men ended up getting killed because of his sin, and the army of Israel was seen as a bunch of cowards, Achan was suddenly faced with the reality that no measure of insubordination is acceptable by God. It's all cancerous, and the way Joshua and the people dealt with Achan demonstrated that reality.

Insubordination is a cancer that spreads to every aspect of our lives! As believers, we have the promise of the Holy Spirit who will mark that sin in our life and give us the opportunity to repent, but if we don't, the same thing can happen to us that happened to Israel. The more insubordination we justify, the more we are able to justify, and before we know it the "practice" of our life is insubordination rather than subordination. Israel started off by ignoring God's very clear command to rid the land of the Canaanites, but it ended with them worshipping idols and practicing every sort of vile and immoral pagan ritual including sacrificing their own children to false gods (Jeremiah 7:31).

So, listen, the insubordination in our life towards God may not be causing any noticeable problems in your life right now, but rest assured that it is at best a precancer that is on the brink of becoming a full fledge melanoma that will spread throughout your entire body. If left justified, insubordination towards God will eventually become a full-on cancer that completely destroys you.

But what do we do about it? How do we combat it? I don't know about you, but it seems like my default nature is to rebel against God. The Apostle Paul himself wrote,

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Romans 7:18-23)

In 1758 this truth led Robert Robinson to write this verse in his hymn called "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing,"

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!

Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.¹¹

So, what are we to do? How do we walk with God in His work to rescue us from sin and give us His life? How do we labor with God in our own souls to battle our tendency to rebel against Him?

Application - The following are five Biblical keys for combatting our tendency of insubordination towards God:

The first key to combat our tendency of insubordination towards God is to,

(1) Stop letting the world define your morality, ethics, priorities, value and purpose and instead define all of it by God's Word!

A. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8)

Note: The Law that Joshua was to learn, and follow was a totally different arrangement than what we have in Christ, and it is no longer applicable to us; however, the principle is the same. The only place to learn what God expects of us is the Bible. The New Testament clearly lays out God's instructions for those who are in Christ, and interestingly as you read and study it you will see that the morals, ethics, priorities, source of value and purpose that are made clear in the New Testament were most certainly present in the Old Testament as well. God didn't invent Law when he made a covenant with Moses for the people of Israel. Therefore, we should read and study the entire Bible to truly understand who God is, who we are, and what He expects of us. Its why Paul wrote,

B. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

C. We also read this in the New Testament,

¹¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Come_Thou_Fount_of_Every_Blessing#:~:text=Prone%20to%20wander%2C%20Lord%2C%20I,it%20for%20Thy%20courts%20above.

- D. **12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)**

The second key to combat our tendency of insubordination towards God may seem a little ironic.

(2) Don't condemn yourself for failure!

- A. To condemn yourself is to say you're finished, God is done with you, and you might as well accept a life apart from His life. That is a lie from Satan to keep you from enjoying His life! Jesus said,
- B. **17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:17)**
- C. **1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-4)**
- D. To condemn yourself because of your sin is to tell God He lied! To act as if you are condemned is of itself insubordination. The Bible says we have been set free from sin by the work of Christ. For you and me to act otherwise is to challenge the authority and integrity of God!

The third key to combat our tendency of insubordination towards God is to ...

(3) Agree with the conviction of the Holy Spirit and follow Him.

- A. **8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8)**
- B. **6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. (Romans 8:6-9)**
- C. **16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)**

- D. As a believer you have been given the gift of the Spirit who will lead you into God's life, but that's a worthless blessing if you refuse to follow HIM! We have influences all around us, but the only one that is truly Holy and Righteous is the Holy Spirit of God within you!

The fourth key to combat our tendency of insubordination towards God is ...

- (4) **Don't hide your sin, confess it to God and trusted friends who love Jesus.**
- A. **"Keeping your struggle quiet can seem attractive, since it lets you nibble a little longer before you flee. But sin is never satisfied." (Garrett Kell)¹²**
- B. **13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)**
- C. **16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:16)**
- D. **8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10)**
- E. As believers, sin has lost its grip on us, but that doesn't mean we've lost our grip on sin. However, by the very act of opening our hands to show God and others the sin we are clinging to, we have already loosened our grip on it.
- F. By showing others what we are gripping in our hands we are now giving them permission to pay attention and hold us accountable.
- G. By showing others what we are gripping in our hands we give them the opportunity to tell us about how God has helped them let go of things they used to grip as well.
- H. Finally, when we show Jesus what we are gripping in our hands He shows us His hands that gripped the penalty of our sin! When we confess our sins to Him, we get the full assurance from Him that they were already forgiven!
- I. **10 Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." (John 8:10-11)**

¹² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/confession-others-sin/>

J. This leads us straight way to the fifth key.

The fifth key to combat our tendency of insubordination towards God is to ...

- (5) Make the practice of your life living in His righteousness so that the experience of His peace and joy contrasts with the experience of sin.**
- A. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:8-9)**
 - B. We are going to come back to this passage in a few weeks so today I just want to point out the action involved in it—practice. Peter writes,**
 - C. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. (2 Peter 1:5-10)**
 - D. Practice doesn't make perfect, it makes permanent. Now when it comes to God's righteousness, no amount of religious practice can achieve it. However, when we repent and believe in Jesus, He gives us His righteousness. Therefore, if I have it, then I can practice it, and if I can practice it, I can experience it!**
 - E. But how does practicing righteousness help me combat my tendency towards insubordination?**
 - 1) The answer is that there is no greater motive to live in subordination to Jesus than the life we experience when we do! The peace and joy that are experienced when we are living in fellowship with the Prince of Peace is incomparable to anything this world has to offer!
 - 2) The love that fills our hearts when we are living our life in Him is a love that can be poured out on this world, but it will never be mined out of the world! His love is only found in Him!

- 3) The life that we experience walking in His righteousness is incomparable to that which is lived in the darkness of sin, therefore, when you make a practice of living in it, the taste of not living in it is disgusting.
- F.** So, make a practice of living in His life and when you find yourself justifying insubordination you will long to be get back to the life you experienced while you were living in submission to Him!