

Delayed Obedience

Joshua Series: 15 of 18

Text: Joshua 17:14-18:6; Emphasis 17:13

Aim: To show there should be no delay in obedience to God's revealed will for our lives.

INTRODUCTION:

So far in the book of Joshua, we have seen the wars under the leadership of General Joshua have put Israel into possession of the whole land of Canaan—the land that God had promised them under the leadership of Moses. The power of the Canaanites has been broken and, as far as major organized opposition is concerned, it has ceased, **BUT the enemy has not been purged and exterminated from the land**. Those Canaanites who remained have scattered into various parts of the land establishing little strongholds within each one of the areas of Israel's inheritance.

AFTER all the major battles had been fought and BEFORE the division of the land had begun, Caleb, that magnificent GIANT of the faith, comes to Joshua in **chap. 14:12** claiming in clear voice and vigorous faith, *"Give me this mountain!"* Caleb pressed his claim for the area of Hebron, previously promised to him by God. After granting that claim, Joshua began subdividing the rest of the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel. Thus each tribe became responsible for putting down any resistance from the Canaanites in their area of inheritance. Every area had pockets of resistance. These pockets **had to be put down**, BEFORE Israel could claim fully their inheritance promised to them by God.

While Joshua was dividing up the land and after major portions of the land had been partitioned out, he was very distressed to learn that the tribes were not following Caleb's **example in casting out the remaining and resisting Canaanites**. By allowing the enemy to remain, Israel was forfeiting her claim to a full inheritance promised by God. This failure to rid the land of the Canaanites and fully possess it WAS AN ACT OF DISOBEDIENCE! >> **NOTE 15:63; 16:9-10; 17:12-13 It seems with little doubt that there was a spirit of disobedience in Israel.**

REMEMBER, there's a spiritual parallel in the book of Joshua in possessing the land of Canaan to that inheritance which God has promised to us as believers. We also have an inheritance, and likewise, God has told us that we must also claim it. Like Israel, God has given us instructions, He has given us the means, and has provided us with the power, BUT it is still up to us to exercise our will and use the spiritual weapons at our disposal to possess the promised land of spiritual maturity that God has said is yours and mine!

A. What is our promised possession? After salvation it is...

1. To have the fullness of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.
2. It is coming to that place of letting the Word of God dwell within you richly allowing you to be the recipient of His blessings by His control of your life.
3. It is coming to the place of total yieldedness to the Lord's will for your life.
4. It is a place of obtaining a working knowledge of the Word of God.
5. It is a place of being in constant communion with our Lord in prayer.
6. In essence it would be the place of spiritual maturity. It is where we realize our position, and power in Christ – ever growing in the grace & knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- All of us can look around God's kingdom and find many believers who have not entered into their inheritance.
- They are still living apart from that which God has promised them.
- They HAVE NOT reached that place in their Christian life where they have obtained victory; where they have started to take pleasure in the land, eating of the grapes, drinking the milk and tasting the honey of the Promised Land.

B. There is a LESSON here...

God wanted Israel and He wants us to possess the land—their inheritance, but there is also a higher object in this for us to learn. Any Divine conquest BEGUN in the power of God with believing dependence on Him MUST be completed and fused in the very same spirit. Canaan has been given to us by God and has been given according to our faith. BUT much is left to do, which only the same faith can achieve.

Any conformity by Israel to the heathen land around them or tolerance of heathenism, any decay of the spirit in which they had entered the land would result not only in weakness, and in the triumph of the enemy. To the NT saint today, our Joshua has led us into Canaan and victory over our enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. BUT we do not yet hold all the cities, nor have all our enemies been purged and exterminated.

There needs to be on our part constant faith;

- There must be NO compromise with the enemy
- NO tolerance of the enemies tendencies in our lives
- NO cessation of our warfare.

Only that attitude, character and spirit which at first gave us the land can complete and consolidate our possession of it.

God has said this inheritance is ours so, I am encouraging you to – RISE UP AND TAKE IT! God promised it—it is a GOOD LAND, flowing with milk and honey. It is a DELIGHTFUL PLACE in which to be living in.

Being in the centre of God's will is the safest and happiest place that any believer could be!

Application

It is far safer to in the centre of God's will being in the deepest jungle – and you'd be far more secure swimming in shark infested waters than to be settled down in the comforts of your sitting room experiencing a false sense of security.

Do you and I not realise there is no protection against the angel of death, the heartache of sickness, disappointments, and hardship. These things know no barriers! No amount of money, position, family or country can prevent their entry into our lives. If they come, I'd rather have the comfort and confidence knowing I am experiencing the sovereign hand of God, rather than to realise His chastening rod of chastisement. *Wouldn't you?*

This is the message of the book of Joshua and of the Israelites in their taking of their inheritance, BUT yet we read of their hesitation! >> **READ Joshua 18:2-3** << Israel has delayed in taking the land! In that delay, they are being disobedient!

Let us sample two passages of what we have read in our text to illustrate the disobedience of Israel in possessing the land.

1. 17:14-18 – The Discontent of the children of Joseph
2. 18:2,3 – The Delay of the Seven Tribes of Israel

I. THE DISCONTENT OF JOSEPH 17:14-18

A. Their Belligerent COMPLAINT – Vs. 14

1. Joseph was one of Jacob's 12 sons and he was the physical salvation of Israel while they were in Egypt and because of that God gave him a special privilege among the 12 sons.
 - a. Jacob, Joseph's father adopted his two sons Manasseh & Ephraim in **Gen. 48** blessing them both with Joseph's inheritance.
 - b. This act, thereby, made two tribes out of one and when we now speak of Joseph we are talking about Ephraim & Manasseh. **Vs. 14** – "*the children of Joseph*," cp. **16:4** and referred to as "*the house of Joseph*" in **17:17**.
2. The land of Canaan was to be divided into 12 parts and Ephraim & Manasseh each were to receive one of the 12 plots of land.
3. Jacob cursed two of his 12 sons Simeon & Levi in **Gen. 49:1** for their cruel slaying of the Shechemites (Gen. 34:25) and prophesied they would be scattered and dispersed in the tribes of Israel. **THEREFORE**:
 - a. **Josh. 18:7** – Levites received no inheritance.
 - b. **Josh. 19:1, 9** – Simeon is given land in Judah's tribe.
 - c. As a result of their curse, Manasseh & Ephraim replaced these two tribes.

B. The CAUSE Of Joseph's Boys Complaint Was Twofold:

1. **Pride** – **17:14** – "*We are a great people!*"
 - a. They were proud of their numerical supremacy. According to the census in **Num. 1** the tribe of Joseph outnumbered every tribe but Judah and later the census in the plain of Moab in **Num. 26** revealed they outnumbered everybody!
 - b. They also had a great heritage and knew it! This is **ALLUDED** to in the phrase – "*forasmuch as the Lord has bless me hitherto*" in **vs. 14**.
 - 1) **TURN >> Gen. 48:20-22** – Abraham blessed Joseph's two sons, Ephraim & Manasseh with greatness and he gave two portions because the tribe of Joseph was divided in two.
 - 2) **Gen. 49:22-26** – Jacob prophesied that God would be a special help to Joseph and He would "*separate*" him "*from his brethren*" giving them an abundance of blessings above all his other children.
 - 3) **Deut. 33:13-17** – This blessing is repeated "*to him that was separated from his brethren*" (vs. 16) and is defined as being the "*thousands*" of Ephraim & Manasseh (vs. 17).
 - c. We need to be **AWARE** of the conditions for blessings!
 - 1) **TURN >> Deut. 28:15 ff.** – Speak of "*curses*" coming upon Israel for disobedience – **vs. 45-48**.
 - 2) All too often we expect fulfilment of God's promises, while we fail to execute our part of the bargain.
 - 3) If we expect God to be faithful, is it too much to ask the same of us?
1 Cor. 4:2 – "*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*"
 - d. The "*children of Joseph*" were filled with the sin of pride!
 - e. Pride prohibits people from humbling themselves and admitting that they can't obtain God's promises in their own strength.
2. Their second complaint had to do with **Selfish Dissatisfaction** –
Joshua 17:14 – "*Why hast thou not give me but one lot and one portion to inherit...*"

- a. Their allotment was the in the richest and most fertile land, capable of producing almost boundless stockpiles of food and of becoming the granary, i.e. the “bread-basket” for the whole land.
- b. Claiming their allotment was too small in light of their population – **they wanted more**, even though in actuality they received more than a double portion!
 - 1) In **Joshua 16:1 ff.** a lot fell to the children of Joseph. The first born of Joseph was Manasseh, but Jacob had bestowed his chief blessing on Ephraim in **Gen. 48:5-20, cp. Josh. 17:5** they received 10 portions.
 - 2) A second lot was give to the tribe of Manasseh in 17:1-2
- c. These folks were looking for 1] special concessions; 2] special treatment; 3] special privileges. Probably, as it is revealed in **Num. 13:8**, Joshua was from the tribe of Joseph.
 - 1) They probably figured, after all, Joshua was one of them and he ought to have taken better care of the interests of his own tribe!
 - 2) Their dissatisfaction with their allotment was an evil foreshadowing of future disintegration of the nation because of **selfish interests**. I might point out also that **SELFISH INTERESTS** will also ruin the local church & prevent personal spiritual maturity.

C. Joshua's CRITICISM of Them – 17:15

1. Joseph's allotment was made up of the cleared plains of Sharon, mountains & wooded areas, but the cleared area wasn't enough for them, they wanted more.
2. Joshua sarcastically challenged them saying, “If you are so great in number and need more room, go into the wooded area and clear it—*Go chop wood!*”
3. Considering that Joshua was himself a descendent of Joseph, his courageous reply to the complaints of his tribe, not only demonstrated sound judgement, moral uprightness and fitness for his calling, but **FAITH** in the promise of God given back in **Josh. 1:2-3,6!** << READ

COMPARE EPHRAIM & MANASSEH TO CALEB.

- **Caleb** was 85 years old & he asked for and got his mountain. He drove the giants off of the mountain and settled the land!
- “*The children of Joseph*” were given the best land, but asked for more AND wanted Joshua to give them a cleared land with NO GIANTS!
- Whereas the **Josephites** request stemmed from **FEAR!**
- **Caleb's** request was motivated by desire to have what God had promised, which was motivated by **FAITH** in God and His word!

The purpose of this episode may well be to alert the Israelites to the **FACT** that the tribes had to act in courageous **FAITH** if they were to possess the Promised Land fully.

God said to them and says to us back in Josh. 1:9 – “*Have I not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.*”

D. The Children of Joseph's CONTENTION –17:16

1. They tried to hide behind a **Camouflage of Excuses**.
 - a. First, was the excuse that the wooded hills weren't big enough.

- b. Then they complained, "Don't you realise there are Giants resident in the towns and valleys? These guys are way too big for us and besides being very well armed—man they got iron chariots."
2. Ephraim & Manasseh are Examples of Christians today.
 - a. Christians who want the blessings of victory without any battles.
 - b. Christians who want a large sphere of service, before they possess that which has already been given to them.

Sophia, a young lady emigrated from Germany and went to live in America.

She attended a good church and learned of world missions. She prayed for 1 year that God would make her a missionary, but never did anything what every Christian is called to do – **WITNESS WHERE SHE WAS!**

The same was true of Linn (Strong), who as a young Christian woman she came to visit us Ireland to see if God would have her be a missionary here. I asked her, "Have you ever had the privileged to lead anyone to the Lord?" She said, "No!" I then asked her if she had been actively trying to win souls where she lived in New England? To her credit, she honestly answered, "No." I explained to her:

1. **God won't lead you on to greater things in your Christian experience, no less make you a missionary across the sea until you are one where YOU are!**
2. **No young person will ever be given greater spiritual opportunities for service until he or she learns to honour, obey & respect their parents.**
3. **You'll never be a leader until you learn to be a good follower.**
4. **If you can't be faithful in church attendance, Bible reading & study, praying, witnessing AND in your giving NOW — how can God give you anything more or greater?**
5. **The Scriptures teach that the Pastor of any church, BEFORE he is qualified to lead an assembly of people, must be able to lead the family in his own home.**

E. Joshua's Purposeful Challenge – 17:17-18

1. **Vs. 17** – He encouraged them to combine their energies – by your own admission; you guys have great numbers, use them to your advantage!
2. **Vs. 18** – He inspired them to perspire! "Cut wood and CAST OUT your enemies! Get to work! Stiff upper lip Ole chap! And all that!"

What God said, *"Have I not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest"* (Josh. 1:9).

They were instructed, as we are today, to make use of their resources and exert faith in the God who has promised them victory and take the land!

Having looked at to he discontent of Joseph's children now let's look at the ...

II. THE DELAY OF THE SEVEN TRIBES OF ISRAEL – 18:1-3

A. Departure From Gilgal – Vs. 1

1. Before the final division of the land was made the Israelites moved en masse from Gilgal to Shiloh, about 20 mi. NW, from the Jordan Valley to the hill country.
 - a. Shiloh = *"place of rest"* – the tabernacle would remain there until the time of the prophet Samuel.
 - b. Shiloh is also the name of the promised Rest-giver – a title of the Messiah, in **Gen. 49:10** – *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until **Shiloh** come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."*

2. **WHY did Israel move?**

- a. No doubt they were divinely directed. Possibly the move was in fulfilment of **Deut. 12:10-11 << READ.**
- b. Because Shiloh was located in the centre of the land it was a convenient location where the tabernacle (which was actually a big tent) could remind the people that the **KEY TO PROSPERITY & BLESSING** in the land was having Jehovah in the centre of their heart, daily living, and service!
3. The tabernacle was to be always to be the focal point of their worship! Like the local church, it was a place where they were to be spiritually renewed and to have fellowship. A rallying point!

B. Delay of going into the Land – 18:2-3

1. Joshua asks the question as to why they had not possessed the Land, but no answers were provided for their procrastination.
2. **Let me suggest THREE REASONS**
 - a. **1st Reason** – They were **CONTENT** – comfortable living off the spoils of past victories like Ai, etc.
 - 1) They are like believers who live off of previous blessing and victories in their Christian walk.
 - 2) They are like believers who can't testify of any present work of God nor have they experience any recent blessings from Him.
 - 3) These tribes were not only living off past blessings, but in the past.
 - a) They had no vision to see the benefits of ridding the countryside of the enemy or taking the wood country as Caleb.
 - b) It was just too much effort & trouble – just too difficult to bother with chasing the people out.
 - c) They were content to stay where they presently were — they had enough spoils to last for a long time.
 - b. **2nd Reason** they possibly delayed in taking the land – They were **CONFUSED**
 - 1) They forgot who enabled them to win former battles – **Josh. 11:6-9**
 - 2) They thought if the giants were to be defeated they ALONE were going to have to do it! But God has said over and over that He would give them the power to obtain the victory!

GOD PROMISED IN Josh. 1:5 >> “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

- 3) They believed they'd have to perform the Christian life all-alone. This may be the reason why some of God's people today don't possess what God has given them for they think they have to do it all and by their own strength and resources!
- 4) The enemy **cannot** and **will not** be defeated in the energy of our flesh. Paul says, **2 Cor. 10:4** – *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds”*
- 5) **We must not forget this!** Nothing is too big, nothing is too great, nor is anything impossible for our God.
3. They were possibly *content* and *confused* but also might I suggest the **3rd Reason** they possibly delayed in taking the land was they were **COMPLACENT**.
 - a. This is a nice way of saying they were **LAZY** – They were satisfied to be given land that others have fought for, but weren't inclined to obey God and do what was necessary to take the land God promised them for themselves!
 - 1) They didn't want to dirty their hands in cutting wood—hard work.

- 2) They didn't want to expend the energy necessary to fight.
 - 3) Laziness is the reason a lot of Christians are babes in Christ and never reach spiritual maturity and grow in grace!
 - 4) It takes time to pray – to read your Bible – to study God's word.
 - 5) IF WE ARE EVER GOING TO: [1] Be filled with God's Spirit; [2] Be victorious in our spiritual lives; [3] Increase in our knowledge about God's Word; [4] Get answers to prayer — We Can't Be LAZY!!
- b. These folks were **PROCRASTINATORS**.
- 1) Sam, the Israelite, says to his neighbour, "Ya know Joe, One of these days we ought to get around to trying to do what God said would work for us!"
 - 2) Today's Christian, "One of these days I am going to really start to live the Christian life and get the victory!"
 - a) I am going to have daily devotions.
 - b) I will follow a programme for reading through the Bible in a year.
 - c) I am gonna schedule a weekly time for real study.
 - d) I plan to have family devotions.
 - e) I intend to be faithful in coming to church, tithing, witnessing, etc.
 - 3) **8:3** – Joshua asks the question, "*How Long? How Long? are ye slack to possess what the Lord God has given you?*"
 - 4) Every day that passes without you and I actively engaging the enemy is a day lost in the programme God that He would have us to be involved in order to obtain spiritual maturity and victory.

C. The Description of the Land in 18:4-6; 8-9 was Joshua's Added Incentive.

1. With three men from each tribe describing the land Joshua hoped to give them a picture of what blessings were in store for each of them, if only they'd get up off the backsides and go out by faith and claim it.
2. Why would anyone want to eat mouldy bread when you can eat fresh fruit of the land? "Hey fellas we've seen and tasted it with our own eyes—**Milk & Honey awaits us!**"
3. Folks, we waste our lives, waste our rewards, waste our inheritance, and waste our blessings because we PROCRASTINATE and are too LAZY to gain the victory we have in the Lord Jesus Christ! *What are we waiting for?*

CONCLUSION:

1. Have you possessed what rightly is yours?
2. If you haven't, God says to you — **How Long?** "*How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?*" (Josh. 18:3).
3. If you are saved and NOT growing in Christ, it is either because of Pride, Selfishness, Complacency, or an outright failure to trust God for the victory.
4. The milk and honey are waiting for us—why not determine to rise up today and claim the victory by faith in our precious Lord who promised it.

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