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This sermon is a sequel to the sermon sent out earlier in the month “*PURSUING OUR POSSESSIONS IN CHRIST.*” I trust that it will be a blessing to you.

POSSESSING OUR INHERITANCE

Scripture Reading – Joshua 1:1-18.

Introduction

Moses had died. He had been a great leader, but now he had gone. He had passed the baton of leadership to Joshua, and now the nation of Israel stood poised on the borders of the promised land of Canaan. It was to possess this land that the people of God had been delivered from the clutches of the Egyptians. It was for this fruitful land that God had brought them through the crisis of the Red Sea, led and protected them in the burning blistering wastes of the desert. It had been a turbulent journey marked by numerous crises and extreme difficulties. The mysterious yet mighty Hand of God had guided them through hardship and deprivation, through fear and anxiety, and so they came to Kadesh Barnea on the border of the Promised Land. And this little obscure desert town became a watershed in the history of God’s people. They were at the crossroads of their destiny and they did not seem to realize it. Moses knew it

and so did Joshua. It was a difficult land with intimidating obstacles. There was a sense of the foreboding that haunted them. Twelve spies were sent out by Moses to investigate the land. Two came back with a vibrant and positive report full of faith and high expectations. The remaining ten spies however, returned with a negative report full of doubt and despair. They focused on the obstacles. They saw the many giants in the land and the well fortified cities and the entrenched armies. The majority of the nation became obsessed with the enormity of the task and the seeming impossibilities of the obstacles that lay before them. Their faith broke down, and they became so problem conscious that they lost their God consciousness. They allowed the power and size of the difficulties to overshadow the power and Almightyness of God. And so doubt laid hold of their hearts and they refused to possess the land that God had promised them. For forty years they wandered in the wasted barrenness of the wilderness of the border country, when all the time just across the river Jordan was the land of God's promise. It was a land with untapped potential waiting to be exploited. But forty years had come and gone. All but Joshua and Caleb of that generation had died and been buried in the wilderness. Their bodies buried in barrenness when they could have inherited the fruitfulness of the land God promised them. Moses had passed on and new generation had emerged, and God laid his Hand on a new leader Joshua. His name significantly means, "Jehovah is Salvation." By Divine appointment he was to be God's instrument of bringing the nation into the land, and so fulfill God's will and purposes for His people. The nation is now ready to obey God's command. In the verses we read together, God is giving

His instructions to Joshua concerning the nation's entry into Canaan. They were about to embark on a journey of eternal significance. The land that lay ahead of them promised a fruitful future because it was their rich inheritance. God's command to them was to march forward and to press on to take the land.. They had lingered too long on the threshold of their inheritance and now it was time to lay hold of it. The wilderness was not the place of God's choosing for them. They were not meant to be children of the desert. God had greater purposes for them than the arid wastes of the wilderness. This was the second time in forty years a nation had gathered to make their journey into the land that God had promised them. The first time they had doubted and disobeyed God. But the new generation was prepared to move into Canaan. This was God's inheritance for them.

In this passage of scripture there are some important factors that God emphasized to the nation that were necessary for their journey and life style and progress as a nation. These factors also have something to say to us on our journey with God. Note firstly,

1. THE OBJECTIVE THAT WAS DESIGNED BY GOD FOR THE NATION.

Joshua 1:2-3. The Lord said to Joshua, "...you and all these people get ready to cross the river Jordan into the land I am about to give to them.....I will give you every place where you set your feet as I promised Moses." There was tremendous power in this promise, because it was God who made it. Oswald Sanders maintained that the "land of Canaan became theirs legally the moment God uttered the promise. It became theirs

experimentally only when they walked around it and actually took possession of it.” This was the objective designed by God for His people. Let me remind you that God has a rich inheritance for us in Christ. The land of Canaan is a type of the life of holiness, but we must step forward in faith if we are to possess it. Two important facts are made clear in these words of instruction and promise. There was,

a. Clarity of Purpose. Joshua 1:2. God said to Joshua, “...get ready to cross the river Jordan into the land I am about to give them.” Clarity and singularity of purpose was absolutely essential to the fulfilling of God’s will. It was fundamental to their achieving what God had designed for them. And so the purpose was clearly stated. One has written that “when you are up to your neck in alligators, it’s difficult to keep your mind on the fact that primary object is to drain the swamp.” Our purposes in life must be clarified because lesser objectives can distract us from the main purpose that God has for us. God had clarified what He required of His people and they made it a priority. That priority would ensure the fulfillment of God’s objective for the nation. It is true what Billy Sunday wrote, “More men fail through lack of purpose than lack of talent.” A Scotsman demonstrated the new game of golf to President Ulysses Grant. Carefully placing the ball on the tee, he took a mighty swing. The club hit the turf and scattered dirt all over the President’s beard and surrounding vicinity, while the ball placidly waited on the tee. Again the Scotsman swung, and again he missed. Our President waited patiently through six tries and then quietly stated, “There seems to be a fair amount of exercise in the game, but I fail to see the

purpose of the ball. Because the Scotsman failed to hit the ball, he failed to clarify the purpose for which it was made, thus confusing the President. So often we flail away at the irrelevancies in life and miss the God's purpose for us. The children of Israel having discovered what God's purpose was for them, moved towards fulfilling that purpose. God's people knew where they going and they moved forward with confidence. They had settled on what God's purpose was for them and focused on it. It was only as they clung to that objective that they would possess the land. It is a Biblical truth that spiritual growth and establishment in holy living will only take place in our lives when make it our prime objective. The second fact of importance in these words of promise was the need for,

b. Consistency in their Progress. Joshua 1:3. God said "I will give you every place where you set your foot as I promised." That opens the door to unlimited possibilities of fruitfulness. God expected that His people would tap the full potential that the land had for them. He wanted them to exploit all if its promise and draw on all of its potential. The land lay before them unlimited in its scope. The challenge was great and was theirs for the taking. The basis and motivation for that action was God's promise to them, for He had made clear that every place where they would set their feet would be theirs. However, they would have to move forward to take and possess the land but It would not be handed to them on a plate. This would mean purposeful progress and determined advancement into the land regardless of the difficulties. They stood

on the banks of the River Jordan ready to go. There they encountered the first obstacle to their progress, which was a river in flood. This was the first test of their faith, but they took this step in God's will, and God opened up the way through the flooded waters and the people walked through on the dry land. Joshua 3:17. There was nothing in the way of the nation to stop their progress in the land, because this was God's objective for them. It was He who designed it. It was His will for them. God's objectives or purposes, no matter how impossible they may appear to be on the human level, are always accompanied by the promise of His presence and power. This is the same God who said to His chosen leader Moses, "I am the one who makes things happen." I will be with you. He dispels the darkness from the light and dries away the difficulty from the pathways. "He knows the way through the wilderness all they had to do is follow." Following Him would keep their eyes fixed on the objective that was designed by God for them. But we also discover,

2. THE DIRECTIVES THAT WERE DESIGNATED BY GOD FOR THE NATION Joshua 1:7-9.

The words of God are important at this point on their journey. **"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and very courageous. Do not be discouraged, for the**

Lord will be with you wherever you go.” The directives that were designated by God are found in,

a. The Divine Exhortation. Joshua 1:9. Be strong and very courageous; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous.” Four times in these fifteen verses is the exhortation given. “Be strong. Be courageous.” There was reason for this. The land they were to take was an unknown land. The task ahead was daunting one. It was filled with danger and death. It was not task for the timid. There were giants in the land that made the average man seem like a Grasshoppers it was said. The cities were well fortified. The powerful tribes were entrenched in a country that belonged to them. This land was their home. The enemies facing God’s people were formidable. They would certainly fight to the death for that which belonged to them. And so the exhortation to be courageous and strong was exceedingly relevant. Courage is the operative word here. Someone once said that Noah was a courageous man to sail in a wooden boat with two termites on board. Winston Churchill said that courage is the first of human qualities, because it is the quality which guarantees all others. And Charles Swindoll tells us that “courage is not limited to the battlefield or the Indianapolis 500 or bravely catching a thief in your house. The real tests of courage are much deeper and greater. They are inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody’s looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you’re misunderstood.” The nation faced difficulties that would test their faith and courage in their quest to possess the land. The Lord urges them to be strong and courageous. He would not be strong for them, nor

would He be courageous for them. He would, however, reinforce and under gird and infuse their strength with the mighty power of His presence and the comforting word of His promise. With God on their side, and so the giants in the land would be reduced to grasshopper size.

This was the basis of David's courage as he faced giant Goliath. The nation thought he was too big to defeat, but David thought he was too big to miss. His confidence was in God and he slew the giant. When the courage of Joshua and the nation was linked together with the presence of God, they were invincible.

The giants would be defeated. I wish I could promise you that there will be no giants in your lives. I wish I could pledge to you that your life will be plain sailing.

I would however, be less than honest if I did that, for we are living in a dangerously evil world which is antagonistic to God. One thing is certain if you commit yourselves to the will of God, and move forward to courageously accomplish His purpose for your lives, He will empower you with the strength of His presence. Be strong and be courageous is what God is saying this morning. This is the Divine exhortation. Tied together with this is,

b. The Divine Expectation. Joshua 1:7-9. God gave careful instructions to His people in verses 7-9. Be careful to obey all the Law my servant Moses gave you: do not turn from it to the right or to the left. Do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night, so that you might be careful to do everything in it.” There are two interesting instructions given here. First they involved

i. The Priority of Obedience to the Will of God. Joshua 1:7. “Be careful to

obey all the Law. Obedience was the key to accomplishing the purposes that God had designed for His people. It was vital to doing God's will. Obedience to everything that God told them, was the guarantee that the Israelites would possess the land. **Obedience!! Not sacrifice!! Not action!! Not courage!! Not strength!! - not even the great army that Joshua led.** But obedience to the word and will of God. These other things may have a part to play, but without obedience they are futile. The prophet Samuel made this clear to a disobedient King Saul when he declared that "To obey is better than sacrifice." Tozer rightly tells us that "the final test of love is obedience, not sweet emotions, not willingness to sacrifice, not zeal, but obedience to the commandments of Christ." God said to Joshua, "be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you." This is the priority of obedience to the will of God. Note it also involves

ii The Supremacy of the Word of God in the life of the nation. Joshua 1:7-8.

God makes this clear. "Be careful to obey all the law," and again, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night, so that you maybe careful to do everything in it." Note the words "obey ALL the Law." There was not to be a selective reading of it or a selective obedience to the Law. There was to be no accommodating the Law to human thinking or human feeling. They were not to manipulate it, in order that people would not be offended. They were to obey ALL the Law. The Law was the written authority. One has written that the Word of God was supreme in the life of the nation. It was set above Joshua. All his decisions and actions were to be regulated by it. He was subservient to it's' authority (Pink p.38). It was to be the source of his leadership

and the foundation upon which the nation would build its life. It became the moral foundation and spiritual strength of God's people. They were to meditate on it day and night so they may careful to do everything in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

This has a relevant message for all of us. Through God's Word, the Spirit of God dwells in fullness in our lives and occupies our heart and mind. To fulfill God's purposes for our lives we are to be indwelt by the person of the Son of God, and filled with the presence of the Spirit of God, and strengthened, fortified and guided by the Word of God. The Word of God must be our focus. God said to His people "do not turn from the right to the left." To be filled with the Word of God is to know life and power. And God says meditate on it, day and night." Joshua 1:8. The Word of God is life. Jesus said the "Words I speak to you, they are Spirit and they are life." The instruction of Joshua is clear. Commitment to it and knowledge of it must be such that careful attention must be given to do everything in it. The Word of God has been given to us and if we are to walk with God and live in true holiness, then we must be fed, nurtured, nourished and guided by it. These are the directives which were designated by God for the good of the nation. Finally observe

3. THE PERSPECTIVE THAT WAS DISTINCTIVE WAS GIVEN TO THE NATION BY GOD. Joshua 1:3, 5, 13, 17. This distinctive perspective was summed up in three concise statements.

a. Look Back. Joshua 1:3, 5, 13, 17. Why look back? The reason is clear.

They had been slaves in the past. There would be unpleasant memories in the past. Surely then it would be a futile exercise to look back. The past is the past and it can be discouraging. But it depends on what you look back to. Note what God told them to do. Look back to what God had said. His statements are worth listening to. Joshua 1:3. The words of God to Joshua come to us with force. His pledge to His people is unchanging **“Every place that the sole of your feet shall tread upon, that I have given you, AS I PROMISED MOSES.** Look back at the promise of the presence of God.

ii. **Joshua 1:5. As I was with Moses so I will be with you.”** Look back at the **faithfulness of God to Moses.**

iii. **Joshua 1:13. “Remember the command of Moses. The Lord your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.”** Look back at God’s assurance that He has given the land to you. Look back in faith is what is being said here. God has been faithful to His promises and has acted in mighty redeeming power to bring you out of slavery. Look back at all of this and move into the land with courage and faith. On the basis of God’s faithfulness in the past, they could move forward with confidence into the future. Look back in faith. The second phrase is

b. Look Up. Joshua 1:5. “As I was with Moses so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” There was no doubt that the Lord had been with Moses. Here is the promise of the same presence upon Joshua and the nation. Look up and see what kind of God He is and see what He has done for you in bringing you to this point in your history. Look beyond

the terrifying giants in the land. Look beyond the well fortified cities in Canaan. Look beyond the well entrenched armies facing you. Look up and get a vision of God. Get a true perspective of who He is. View all of the obstacles before you in the light of the Greatness and Almightyness of God. Look up, for the God who snapped your chains of bondage in Egypt, has not abandoned His throne. He is still the Sovereign Lord. This is the God who told them that He had already given them the land of Canaan. It was the Promised Land. Look up! for the years have not changed the God we serve. God calls us to move forward with Him. He still calls us to inherit all that there is in Christ Jesus. There is so much more in the dimensions of grace to appropriate. There is so much to cover in the land of holy living to which He has called us. He has called us holiness and it is His will that we be sanctified. This is the inheritance He has promised us. His call and His will are still reinforced by eternal promises, and He will never fail us. Let us move forward to possess the land. Look up and finally,

c. Look forward. Joshua 1:2, 13, 18. This is vital. The previous generation that had experienced the power and the faithfulness of God, refused to move forward in the will of God. That refusal was disastrous. The writer to the Hebrews tell us that they died in the wilderness and that their bones lay bleached on the barren wastes of the desert. Not to move forward was fatal. The story makes clear that they died on the parameters of God's promise to them. BUT NOW Joshua stood with the nation on the banks of the swollen waters of the river Jordan. The same obstacles were there, the giants were not diminished in size, they moved regardless into the land and God went ahead of

them. They did not know what the future held for them, but God was in control. They were not promised the easy way. They were promised that God would lead them, and give power to overcome everything they would face. It is a parable and a message for us in our walk with God.

Conclusion

Charles Simpson told of how he had met a young man who dives for exotic fish for aquariums. He said one of the most popular aquarium fish is the shark. He explained that if you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay the size proportionate to the aquarium. Sharks can be six inches long yet fully matured. But if you turn them loose in the ocean; they grow to their normal length of eight feet. That also happens to some Christians. I've seen some of the cutest little six inch Christians who swim around in a little puddle. But if you put them into a larger arena, into the whole creation, only then can they grow. God is calling us to inherit all that He has for us in the ocean of His Grace and the land of holy living. There is a vast ocean ahead and each of us needs to plunge in and reach out for as much of God and His grace as is possible. That ought to be the shining purpose of our lives. Let us clarify it and move towards it with God. Let us possess our inheritance.