

ENTER AT YOUR OWN REST

Studies in the Book of Joshua

"Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it"

Alan Redpath

Text

Joshua 13:1-7

Topic

God commands Joshua to divide the land among the tribes of Israel and encourages them to finish the task of subduing all the country

Title

"New Country for Old Men"

Joshua 13:1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

Joshua 13:2 This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all that of the Geshurites,

Joshua 13:3 from Sihor, which is east of Egypt, as far as the border of Ekron northward (which is counted as Canaanite); the five lords of the Philistines--the Gazites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites;

Joshua 13:4 from the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorites;

Joshua 13:5 the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon as far as the entrance to Hamath;

Joshua 13:6 all the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the Brook Misrephoth, and all the Sidonians - them I will drive out from before the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I have commanded you.

Joshua 13:7 Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh."

Introduction

It's become somewhat popular for you to create a list of fifty or even one hundred 'Things to Do Before I Die.' Some call it a 'bucket list.'

You put the things that you want to accomplish in your proverbial bucket before you 'kick the bucket.'

I don't have my own list yet so I visited a few on line. I found things like these:

- Set foot on each of the seven continents.
- Watch the space shuttle land.
- Attend a major sporting event, e.g., the Superbowl or the World Series.
- Go to Oktoberfest.
- Skydive.
- Swim with a dolphin.

I don't think we can call chapter thirteen a bucket list but the Lord did come to Joshua in his old age and remind him of unfinished spiritual business.

It struck me that we want to finish strong in our walk with the Lord. We want to take care of the 'business' of serving Him.

Joshua's senior moment gives us an opportunity to explore how we're doing in our serving (whether we are old or young physically or in the Lord). Are we still pressing forward to the finish line? Or have we begun to coast towards it?

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 It's Not Too Late For You To Intensify Your Vision For Serving The Lord, and #2 It's Not Too Early For You To Impart Your Vision For Serving The Lord.

#1 It's Not Too Late For You
To Intensify Your Vision For Serving The Lord
(v1&7)

Joshua 13:1-7
"New Country for Old Men"

The initial conquest of the Promised Land took about seven years. The Israeli military had broken the backbone of Canaanite power in three great battles:

1. In the central region they had taken the strategic fortified city of Jericho.
2. In the south they had defeated a combined force at Gibeon.
3. In the north they had defeated a huge enemy contingent by the waters of Merom.

It was time for the combined military of Israel to stand-down and for each tribe to take the responsibility of driving out any remaining resistance. And there was still some outlying territory to conquer.

Joshua was at least ninety and perhaps as much as one hundred years old by this time. Not extremely old for an Old Testament guy. But the phrasing God used indicates that his years of serving had taken a toll on Joshua. We read,

Joshua 13:1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

Another translation, the Complete Jewish Bible, translates the opening phrase "Now Joshua was old; the years had taken their toll."

Serving the Lord can take its toll on you. I can't help but think of the apostle Paul and the sheer weight of the physical toll serving the Lord took on him.

Do you feel as though serving the Lord has cost you dearly? Exacted its toll? Then you are in glorious company!

How do you feel about God's seeming bluntness addressing Joshua? The text says Joshua was "old and advanced in years." God says, "You are old and advanced in years."

Joshua 13:1-7
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There is a realism about God we sometimes try to ignore. He's not harsh or mean, just real. If you've ever had to give biblical counsel to someone you know what I mean. Sometimes you have to remind a person that this is their lot in life; deal with it by drawing upon the spiritual resources God has graciously provided.

Believe it or not believers have mid-life crises. I'm not condoning them just recognizing that they occur. Hey, that's your life. You don't have the spiritual freedom to abandon your family to experience worldly things you might have missed. Yes, you're getting older and will soon be too old for some things. So what?

God reassigned Joshua:

Joshua 13:1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: "You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed.

Joshua 13:7 Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh."

Joshua began his spiritual career as assistant to Moses. Under Moses he had led the Israeli army. After Moses he led both civilian and military affairs. Now, in his old age, he was to be an administrator in charge of dividing the inheritance of the land.

Are you open - truly open - to reassignments? It can be a very difficult moment for you. I've known too many believers who have fought God's reassignment and refuse to budge.

Sometimes a reassignment seems obvious. You require a certain ability or skill-set to serve in a particular capacity and you lose that ability or skill-set. Still, you want to hang on. You feel as though your spiritual identity is wrapped-up in your place of service.

Joshua 13:1-7
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It's not! Your spiritual identity is to be a servant. Period.
Reassignment is part of being a servant.

Two and one half of the twelve tribes of Israel had already received their land on the east side of the Jordan River. The remaining tribes awaited their inheritance. The rest of the Book of Joshua will relate the allotting of their lands (with some great stories thrown in for our learning!).

Joshua had, in a sense, 'arrived.' After an extra forty toll-taking years of wandering in the wilderness with a disobedient generation he was in the land. He had distinguished himself as their general but now the major fighting was ended. He was an old man.

But in another sense, in a spiritual sense, Joshua had not 'arrived' because you never 'arrive' in serving the Lord until you are dead.

I mentioned reassignment. There is another lesson here for those of us who don't need reassignment but rather a reassessment. Look at the service God has called you to perform. It's not unusual for a believer to slack-off, especially if you've been serving in a certain capacity for a long time. God's talk with Joshua gives you encouragement to intensify your vision for serving the Lord.

Have you really accomplished everything possible in your area of service? The answer to that is "No." Get excited about what the Lord has given you to do. Pour yourself into it. Renew and refresh your original vision. Ask the Lord for new direction.

Especially if you are old or getting there you should be looking to raise-up others younger than you to carry on the work God has given to you. That is our point for verses two through six.

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#2 It's Not Too Early For You
To Impart Your Vision For Serving The Lord
(v2-6)

Not only did the land Joshua had conquered need to be allotted.
There was outlying land that needed to be taken.

Joshua 13:2 This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all that of the Geshurites,

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Had Joshua somehow failed by leaving these enemies in the land?

No, he hadn't. He didn't leave them there. God did. In the sequel to Joshua, the Book of Judges, you read about these people and when you do it says,

Judges 3:1 Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan

Judges 3:2 (this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it),

Enemies were purposely left for two reasons:

1. To "test" subsequent generations.
2. To "teach" subsequent generations.

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God's tests are not to see you fail but to help you pass with high honors. It's been said that a faith not worth testing is not worth having.

In the testing there is always teaching. It's one thing to tell the next generation that Joshua stopped the sun and the moon in the sky for a day; it's another for them to confront enemies and learn first hand God's miracles.

Joshua was to turn over the work of driving out the remaining enemies to each individual tribe and to their descendants after them. He was to impart the Lord's vision and encourage them to serve the Lord.

If you are a family with a child or children then you are charged with raising that child or those children "in the way that they should go" (Proverbs 22:6). That "way" is, first and foremost, to understand and believe that Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

You're not done once your kids know the Lord! You've only just begun. You must impart to them a vision for serving the Lord. Jesus said He came to serve not to be served. Unless we understand we are here to serve and not be served we are misrepresenting the Lord.

What is true in your home is true in God's church. We are collectively to be raising-up and training the next generation to serve the Lord.

These two goals meet when we encourage, by our example, our kids to attend and be involved in the church and its activities.

There were always lots of activities competing with the church when our kids were growing up. Some were good, positive activities with a Christian emphasis. Others were healthy physically with a not-so "Christian" emphasis.

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All I can say is that we put serving the Lord at the top of the list. I'm glad we did and I highly recommend you do the same.

The most famous line in the Book of Joshua is still ahead of us. It's when Joshua states, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (24:15).

Is your "house" busy serving the Lord? It can be! Impart a vision to your kids for serving the Lord.

Is our household of faith raising up young people to serve the Lord? We are and I am grateful for the Lord's leading.

Having said all that, I see a personal and corporate challenge in our text. It is the words, "there remains very much land yet to be possessed."

As a fellowship, I want to see us conquer the land God has given us.

- In some cases we need to do it as a congregation as we rally behind a vision for serving that God gives us.
- In other cases it means our strengthening your family so you can conquer the individual land God has given to you.

As we wait for the Lord's imminent return it may mean reassignments.

It will always mean that we stay intense and that we commit to imparting our vision to 'always be serving.'

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