



Most people take pride in the city they grew up in. Whatever town you grew up in is special to you. I grew up down the road in Los Altos. That town dates back to 1906 when Paul Shoup, of the Southern Pacific Railroad, bought 140 acres from Sarah Winchester, the widow of the inventor of the Winchester rifle. He planned a new town to serve the railroad cutoff and named it Los Altos, which means “the heights.”

In 1956, the year I was born, my parents built a home there. It was an idyllic place to grow up with orchards to run around in, trees to climb, and creeks to explore. Our home backed up to Adobe Creek and I spent many days down there catching both lizards and poison ivy. I lived there until I went off to college, and then about 15 years later moved back in with my own family, having bought the house from my dad. Five years ago we sold the home and moved up to San Carlos. I think our kids have just now forgiven us for that. And I still drive down there once in a while just to see how the house is doing.

Maybe there wasn't a whole lot to be proud of there, but we were proud of our high school football team. We were proud that Steve Jobs grew up there. We were proud of our annual Pet Parade down Main Street in May.

Now I know you didn't come here this morning to join me on a walk down memory lane, but this had to be how the Israelites felt when they read chapters 15-19 of the book of Joshua. These chapters describe the dividing up of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes of Israel. There's a lot of detail for those of us who know nothing of this land or the cities they inhabited there. And it's hard for us to imagine how these chapters could speak to us in a personal way. We read of places like Kiriath Araba where Caleb defeated the sons of Anak, Shiloh where the ark of the Lord was stationed, and Timnath Serah where Joshua lived out his last years. But this is God's Word, and I think if we dig deeply there's plenty for us to learn.

An Overview of the Division of the Land

Let me start by giving you a view of these chapters from 50,000 feet. The division of the land took place by casting lots. No one knows exactly what that process looked like, but it was God's way of directing Israel through this process. So no one could really complain about what they got because it was clearly God's will. The allotment took place first from Gilgal and then later from Shiloh. Remember, all of this is a witness to the faithfulness of God. God keeps his promises! He'd promised this land to his people centuries before. The dividing of the land is like a kid dividing up his candy on Halloween. There's a note of joy and victory in all of this!

Let me give you an overview of how the land was divided up:

The allotment east of the Jordan River (Ch. 13). This was given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh. These guys liked to raise cattle and the land east of the Jordan was perfect for that. They didn't seem to care they weren't in the actual Promised Land. Later in Joshua we'll learn while this choice might have been good for their cattle business it wasn't so good for their children and their spiritual legacy. These are like believers who “ride the fence” with one foot in the world and one foot with God's people.

The allotment for the tribe of Judah, including Caleb (Chs. 14-15). Judah is given prominence because of the special role it plays in the unfolding of God's plan. Years earlier, when Jacob blessed his twelve sons he said, *“the scepter will not depart from Judah...”* (Gen. 49:10). King David came from the tribe of Judah and so would the Messiah, Jesus. This is also where Jerusalem and the temple would be built.

The allotment for the tribe of Joseph (Chs. 16-17). This tribe was split in two—Ephraim and Manasseh. Half of Manasseh already settled east of the Jordan, but the other half settled west of the Jordan along with Ephraim. They were given large territories in the central part of the land, again, reflecting the favor of Jacob's blessing when he called Joseph, *“a prince among his brothers”* (Gen. 49:26).

The allotment for the remaining seven tribes and Joshua (Chs. 18-19). These were the tribes of Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan. All of these allotments were made from Shiloh where they'd placed the tabernacle of God.

There's two more notes of interest:

First, at the start Caleb gets a special plot of land and at the end Joshua gets the same. Both these men are rewarded for their faith demonstrated when Israel spied out the land 45 years earlier. They were the only two who came back with a good report. Of Joshua we read, *“When they had finished dividing the land into its allotted portions, the Israelites gave Joshua son of Nun an inheritance among them, as the Lord had commanded. They gave him the town he asked for—Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim. And he built up the town and settled there”* (19:49-50).

Notice also the only tribe without an allotment of land is Levi. In chapter 18 Joshua says, *“The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the Lord is their*

inheritance" (v. 7). Next week we'll learn how the Levites were spread out in different cities spread through the land.

Notice that word "inheritance." That's the key word in these chapters. It's used over 50 times. It's an important word in both the Old and New Testament. For the Jewish people, their inheritance consisted of the land. For followers of Christ our inheritance is different. But the two correspond to each other. The inheritance of land in Joshua foreshadows our inheritance as followers of Christ. We have an inheritance too. And we can learn some things from these chapters about our inheritance.

Our inheritance is a gift

The first thing is our inheritance is a gift. In 18:3 he calls it *"this possession which God has given."* The Jews inherited their land. They didn't win the land in battle or purchase the land in a business transaction. They simply received it by faith. The Lord was the sole owner of the land and he gave it to them because he loved them.

It's like when Princess Diana died, she left a huge inheritance for her two sons, William and Harry, in the amount of \$20.4 million. In their teens and twenties that amount grew to \$31.4 million. But the provision was such that William and Harry were only able to inherit this after their 30th birthdays. Until then, the estate was theirs. It was in their names, and it was set aside for them. But they didn't earn it; it was a gift.

In the same way, as followers of Christ, we have an inheritance. Based on Jesus' promise, it's ours. It's in our name. It's set aside for us. At the right time we'll receive our inheritance in full. We don't earn it. We don't purchase it. We just receive it by faith. Rom. 6:23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Eph. 2:8-9 says, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."*

Our inheritance is real

The second thing is our inheritance is real. If you look at chapter 15 the detail is mind numbing: every town is named, every border point and land marked. Again, it's boring to us but not if that's your hometown.

You see, there's a concreteness to our inheritance. God's word is rarely about some bare, purely spiritual, inner abstraction. The God of the Bible tends to be concrete, his gifts are tangible. He doesn't give just ideas, he gives boundaries and towns. This is how God is. So when he wanted to communicate with us most clearly, he became flesh in the person of Jesus. There's an earthiness to God. Even our hope of heaven isn't to float around on clouds as spirits, but to have real resurrection bodies. Not only that, we'll live in the new heavens and new earth, with thrones and trees and a river that flows through a city surrounded by a wall with twelve gates. Revelation even gives us the measurements of that city!

So Israel's concrete, physical inheritance is a foreshadowing of our own. Even many of the blessings we enjoy now this side of

heaven are physical. These past few weeks we've been blessed with two new, healthy grandsons. And, of course, they're real! They cry and spit up all over your sweater. But they're like little incarnations of God faithfulness.

Our inheritance is inclusive of all believers

The third thing is this inheritance is inclusive of all believers. We got the first hint of that back in chapter 14 (verses 6, 14) where we learned Caleb was a Kenizzite. So Caleb was an outsider who was adopted into Israel and became an ardent follower of Yahweh.

We also see this in chapter 17 where the allotment given to the tribe of Manasseh is described. Look what happened.

Now Zelophehad son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons but only daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah. They went to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders and said, "The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our relatives." So Joshua gave them an inheritance along with the brothers of their father, according to the Lord's command. Manasseh's share consisted of ten tracts of land besides Gilead and Bashan east of the Jordan, because the daughters of the tribe of Manasseh received an inheritance among the sons. The land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the descendants of Manasseh (verses 3-6).

The background for this is found in Numbers 27. Zelophehad died having no sons, and normally sons inherited their father's land. If there were no sons, the inheritance went to the nearest male relative. But his five daughters had asked Moses for their father's inheritance instead. It was an unusual and bold request. Moses took it to the Lord who told him to grant it. So this is a follow-up to that. They remind Joshua God commanded Moses to give them the inheritance.

This shows us in giving this inheritance God doesn't give preference to certain ethnicities or a certain gender or a certain economic class of people. We're all joint heirs of this inheritance. The NT is adamant about this. Paul wrote, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you're Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise"* (Gal. 3:28-29). This isn't a denial of our diversity, it's just that with God there's no distinction when it comes to receiving the benefits of his grace. We're all heirs. We all have an inheritance.

Our inheritance reveals God's sovereignty

In fact, this whole idea of diversity is also stressed in these chapters. Everyone got something, but what they got was different, and this reveals God's sovereignty.

As I said, Judah is clearly given preference—a whole chapter is given to Judah, not to mention the biggest swath of land. At the same time, the tribe of Simeon didn't even get their own territory

but instead was given a few cities in the territory of Judah. Simeon could have said, "But God, that's not fair!" Sometimes God's ways don't seem fair. It's a reminder to us that his ways aren't our ways.

Sometimes we have trouble accepting that. In fact, that's exactly what the tribe of Joseph felt. Look at chapter 17:14.

The people of Joseph said to Joshua, "Why have you given us only one allotment and one portion for an inheritance? We are a numerous people, and the Lord has blessed us abundantly."

They're upset with what they got. They think they should get more because they're so numerous. They're like the little brother who complains his sister got a bigger piece of pie than he did. Do you ever feel like that? "Why does this person have everything I want. It's not fair." In those times we have to wrestle with the sovereignty of God. We don't understand his ways and they don't always seem fair, but God is good. In those times I've leaned heavily on verses like Romans 16:27 where Paul, who had many reasons to feel cheated by God, called him "the only wise God." Think about that. God is alone in his wisdom. We don't always understand his ways, but the more we get to know him, the more we can trust his wisdom even when his ways seem strange and unfair.

How do you think Joshua handled this complaint as a leader? Look at v. 15.

"If you are so numerous," Joshua answered, "and if the hill country of Ephraim is too small for you, go up into the forest and clear land for yourselves there in the land of the Perizzites and Rephaites."

Joshua is like, "Hey, you have plenty of land there. If you have so many people, go clear the forests and drive out the people who remain." Joshua sees this as one of those times they can do something about their situation. And there are times when that's true of us as well. Then the real issue comes up in v. 16.

The people of Joseph replied, "The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the plain have chariots fitted with iron, both those in Beth Shan and its settlements and those in the Valley of Jezreel."

The real issue is those people up there in the forests have chariots and they don't want to get creamed. So this is a faith issue. Joshua knew that and look what he says in v. 17.

But Joshua said to the tribes of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—"You are numerous and very powerful. You will have not only one allotment ..."

For one, that's great leadership, but it also tells us something else about our inheritance.

Our inheritance requires vigorous faith and perseverance

It tells us our inheritance requires vigorous faith and perseverance. The real issue for the tribe of Joseph was a lack of trust in God. That comes out several times in these chapters. God clearly

commanded Israel to drive out all the Canaanites, but look at these verses:

15:63: Judah couldn't dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the people of Judah.

16:10: They did not dislodge the Canaanites living in Gezer; to this day the Canaanites live among the people of Ephraim but are required to do forced labor.

17:12-13: Yet the Manassites were not able to occupy these towns, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that region. However, when the Israelites grew stronger, they subjected the Canaanites to forced labor but did not drive them out completely.

God told them to drive out all the Canaanites because the cancer of idol worship would infect Israel unless the most radical surgery removed it. But they failed in that, and it would later come back to haunt them as they adopted their idolatrous practices.

We see the same thing in chapters 18-19 with the seven tribes who get their land. They're all sitting around, twiddling their thumbs, and Joshua says, *"How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has given you?"* (18:3).

There's an aspect to our inheritance we must fight to obtain. The battle is never completely over when it comes to fighting sin. Sometimes, like the Israelites, we make some progress, even have a major victory, but we stop there. We get lazy or complacent. That's why the Bible talks so much about persevering. Our faith isn't so much proven by our courage in a crisis but by ordinary, everyday faithfulness. Ralph Davis writes, "We frequently and strangely prove faithful in the great crisis of faith, remain steadfast in severe storms, perhaps even relish the excitement of the heaviest assaults, yet lack the tenacity, the dogged endurance, the patient plodding often required in the prosaic affairs of believing life; we are often loath to be faithful in what we regard as little."

Sometimes it's not laziness but we just lack the boldness and faith to lay hold of our inheritance. We're like someone who enters a shop, gets what we need, and finds no one at the cash register. But there's a bell at the counter and a sign, "Ring bell for service." But for some reason we don't ring the bell. Maybe we think we're being too impatient, or we don't want to appear demanding. But the reality is the shopkeeper provided the bell because he wants us to use it!

There are some things in the Christian life we have to go after. Maybe God has put on your heart an idea to start some kind of ministry. But you feel inadequate or you have no idea where you'd get the resources to pull it off. Don't let that stop you. Commit your way to the Lord and step out in faith. He'll provide what you need.

Fortunately, there are also some great examples in these chapters of men and women who got this. We saw last week at eighty-five Caleb still had incredible energy and faith. Well, there's more. Look at 15:13-14.

In accordance with the Lord's command to him, Joshua gave to Caleb son of Jephunneh a portion in Judah—Kiriath Arba, that is, Hebron. (Arba was the forefather of Anak.) From Hebron Caleb drove out the three Anakites—Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai, the sons of Anak.

So Caleb isn't finished yet. Remember the Anakites are giants! Here's this 85-year-old man taking on these giants! And what's great about this is his faith had an impact on his family. Look at verses 15-19.

From there he marched against the people living in Debir (formerly called Kiriath Sepher). And Caleb said, "I will give my daughter Aksah in marriage to the man who attacks and captures Kiriath Sepher." Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother, took it; so Caleb gave his daughter Aksah to him in marriage.

One day when she came to Othniel, she urged him to ask her father for a field. When she got off her donkey, Caleb asked her, "What can I do for you?"

She replied, "Do me a special favor. Since you have given me land in the Negev, give me also springs of water." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

Look at Caleb's influence. He encourages his nephew Othniel as they're facing this strong Canaanite city. Caleb says to this young man, "You've got this!" Othniel, who's seen the results of faith in his uncle Caleb's life, leads a victory over the city and gains his young bride, Achsah, who's also a woman of faith. As a new bride, she asks for some springs of water. She's a lot like her dad, isn't she? She's not afraid to go for it and make the Big Ask. Caleb's example of faith and courage has impacted his own family.

When I think of Caleb, I think of my father, who would have celebrated his 92nd birthday on Friday. What I loved about my dad is his best years came in his 70's and 80's. At age 69 he was a retired widower; an alcoholic rapidly burning through his hard earned money. When I visited him in his third rehab I met his doctor and the first thing he said to me was, "Your dad is going to die." I said, "Well, it's nice to meet you, too!" And I have no doubt he would have died. But a few days later he gave his life to Christ. He defeated the giant of alcoholism and never took another drink to the day he died 20 years later. He got involved in church, he read God's word, he sponsored others in recovery, he allowed the Lord to transform his character, and he invested deeply in his six grandkids. It doesn't matter how old you are, God wants you to continue to grow and change and have an impact.

In all of this, we've seen kind of a tension in our experience. God has promised us our inheritance, but it must be actively possessed. It's God's gift to us but we can't be passive. God's

promises aren't intended as sedatives but stimulants. On the one hand, Peter can say we have an *"inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade,"* which is *"kept in heaven for you"* (1 Pt 1:4). He can also say God has *"given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature..."* But then he adds this, *"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge,"* and so on. You see, you have this inheritance waiting for you, but effort is still required.

Dallas Willard wrote, "The abundance of God is not passively received and does not happen to us by chance. The abundance of God is claimed and put into action by our active, intelligent pursuit of it. We must act in union with the flow of God's kingdom life that comes through our relationship with Jesus. We cannot do this, of course, purely on our own. But we must act. Grace is contrasted with earning but not with effort. Well-directed, decisive, and sustained effort is the key to the keys of the kingdom and to the life of restful power in ministry."

With that in mind, let me give you two point of application:

Pray that God would open your eyes to understand more of your inheritance. In Ephesians Paul prays for God to open the eyes of our heart that we'd be able to comprehend the riches of our inheritance. We're like an eight-year-old boy playing with a toy truck when it breaks. He throws a fit and cries out to his parents to fix it. As he's crying, his father says to him, "A distant relative you've never met has just died and left you a hundred million dollars." How will the child's react? He'll just cry louder until his truck is fixed. Why? Because he can't comprehend what he's been given. In the same way, we lack the spiritual capacity to realize all we have in Jesus. So ask God to open your eyes.

Live in the tension of "already but not yet." There are certain aspects of our inheritance we can take hold of now, but others which will only come when we see Jesus face to face. In Ephesians, Paul says when we became believers we were "marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." So here's the tension: we have the Holy Spirit. We have a little bit of our inheritance now. We have all the resources of the life of God within us. And we need to take advantage of that, and that takes effort. But we also need to remember that's only a down payment of what's to come. We don't get it all until eternity. So enjoy and use the benefits of your inheritance now, but also eagerly wait for what's to come.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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