

“Working Out Our Blessings”

Joshua 17:14-18

4/20/10

Introduction: When God called Moses, he promised him the blessing of relief (out of the hands of Pharaoh). Yet, we know, this was not an easy task. Moses had to repeatedly go and plead with Pharaoh to let God’s people go (**Exodus 6:10-11**). In another instance, when the Israelites were promised the city of Jericho, it was not just handed to them. They had to do some work in order to occupy the city (**Joshua 6:2-3**). In both situations, God had promised them blessings, but they had to work out their blessings. In our lesson tonight, we will look into the lives of two tribes of Israel (Manasseh and Ephraim) and see that they had to accomplish a task before they could enjoy their blessings. This should remind us that sometimes our blessings come with burdens that we must overcome.

Verses 14-15

The Complaint

Here we see the children (tribesmen) of Joseph complaining to Joshua. Joseph had two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim) and the *children of Joseph* in these verses are referring to the families of Ephraim and Manasseh. Why were they upset? At this time, the entire nation of Israel was under the leadership of Joshua. These tribes were experiencing some growing pains. Their complaint to Joshua was they had **outgrown** the portion of land that was given to them. They knew God had blessed them and made them “a great people”. We would think this was a good problem. However, sometimes with blessings comes added burden. Even though Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, he does not show **favoritism** and does not expect his people to gain (land) without experiencing some pain. Likewise, we should not expect God to bless us without us first making a **deposit** into His kingdom. The Bible tells us (like Joshua) we should not display favoritism (**James 2:9**). The Lord had intended for them to have a portion large enough for two tribes. They were so busy complaining about what they did not have that they missed what God had for them. In verse 15, Joshua uses their argument in his response. He says if you are so great (“if thou be great...), then go and clear up (“cut down for thyself”) extra land in the forested hills (**Galatians 6:3**). In other words, they should be able to overpower the Perizzites who control the land (**Hebrews 11:6**). We must be willing to accept short-term **sacrifices** in order to receive long-term gains. We are living in a society where people want everything handed to them on a silver platter. They do not want to invest the time, money, or energy that it takes to get what is intended for them.

Verse 16

The Complacency

In this verse, the complacency of the people is displayed (**Proverbs 19:24**). They want the land, but are **fearful** of the enemy that holds the land now (**2 Timothy 1:7**). We see that Joshua has given them an **option** to take the land, but they are hesitating even though God had warned them in the past not to fear the enemy. They should have **realized** that God was with them and they could take the land (**Romans 8:31**). They believed the giants would easily defend themselves, frustrate their efforts and thus gain the **advantage**. Nevertheless, they failed to recognize that our God is a giant killer! God plus no one else is more than enough. When we go forth in the name of the Lord, we can face the giants in our lives (**1 Samuel 17:45**). Some people never reach their full potential because they are living in the comfort zone of complacency. An oak tree is really an acorn that would not stay underground. We should never settle for less when the Lord has already promised us the best (**1 Corinthians 2:9**).

Verses 17-18

The Command

Joshua commands and encourages them to act according to their **ability** (“great people...great power”) (**Deuteronomy 20:1**). He does not listen to the **excuses** of the people. They will be required to take the land that they want (only what was promised to them). When the trees of the land are cut down, there will be plenty of land for them. Joshua is also telling them to go **beyond** the wooded area and take the land on the other side. We should believe that there is no weapon formed against God’s people will prosper (Isaiah 54:17). Remember, obedience brings opportunity. Like these people, how often have we acted in fear? The Bible tells us that we have been given everything to win the battle (**1 John 4:4**). Sometimes we look at our problems and **doubt** the power that is in us (Christ) (**Matthew 28:18**) (**Philippians 4:13**). Will we continue to wait on our blessings? Just maybe the Lord is trying to see if we are going to take the first step in working out our blessings.