

Sold Out

March 26 — *Joshua 12:7-15:19*

Day 85 — 280 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Joshua listed all of the kings which he and Israel defeated in the land of Canaan, thirty-one in all. Then God informed Joshua that he was getting old and that much of the land still needed to be conquered, so He commanded him to go ahead and allot each tribe's inheritance and to let them drive out the inhabitants in their area.

It was at that point that Caleb approached Joshua with a special request. Remember, Caleb was one of the spies who returned from Canaan with a good report and the zeal to conquer it with God's assistance. "I was forty years old when Moses sent me to explore the land of Canaan. I returned and gave **from my heart** a good report, but my brothers frightened the people and discouraged them from entering the Promised Land. For my part, **I followed the Lord my God completely**" (14:7, 8).

Because of Caleb's spirit and because **"he wholeheartedly followed the Lord"** (15:14), Moses swore on that day to give a special piece of the Promised Land to Caleb and his descendants. Caleb was requesting that piece from Joshua, who gifted him with the city of Hebron. Shortly after, at the spry age of 85, Caleb and his men drove out from Hebron the Anakites, who were known to be giants.

What does it mean exactly to "follow the Lord wholeheartedly"? It means that Caleb abandoned his own sinful desires and selfish agenda and, instead, **sold out to the Lord**. It means that Caleb was obedient to all that the Lord commanded, no matter what. It means that Caleb saw his circumstances and his problems in light of God's power and, therefore, he never doubted that, with God's help, he could overcome anything that came his way.

Imagine what life would be like if we all lived in the spirit of Caleb. Imagine the confidence we would have if we lived with the mindset that nothing was too difficult for God. Nothing would intimidate us or cause us to worry or fear; and, nothing would be more important to us than to do what was right by the Lord. With that spirit **we would conquer giants!**

Daily Reflection

How would you describe being sold out to the Lord, to live in the spirit of Caleb?

Why aren't more followers of God like Caleb?
How sold out to God are you?

Too many people are either sold out to this world or sold out to themselves. Selling out to these things will leave you bankrupt of hope; but, selling out for the Lord will stretch and grow your faith beyond measure!

"If any man wishes to come after Me, let him deny Himself, take up his cross, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

Whipping the World

March 27 — *Joshua 15:20-17:18*

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Day 86 — 279 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Joshua continued dividing the land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel. The land was given according to the size of each tribe, and God was the one who parceled them out through the casting of lots. Today, Joshua assigned land to Judah, Ephraim, and the other half of Manasseh (remember the first half stayed on the east side of the Jordan River).

What was interesting were the little comments Joshua inserted about each tribe. For example, concerning Judah he wrote, "The tribe of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites, who lived in the city of Jerusalem, so the Jebusites live there among the people of Judah to this day" (15:63). Concerning Ephraim, he wrote, "They did not drive the Canaanites out of Gezer, so the people of Gezer live among the people... to this day" (16:10). Finally, concerning Manasseh, he wrote, "The descendants of Manasseh were unable to occupy the towns of the Canaanites. They could not drive out those who lived there. Later on, however, when the Israelites became strong enough, they forced the Canaanites to work as slaves; but, they did not drive them out of the land" (17:12, 13).

In essence, although God commanded that the Israelites conquer and destroy every pagan tribe in Canaan, in the end the people didn't do it. Thus, **these worldly tribes lived in the midst of God's people and eventually caused them to be unfaithful.**

This truth is applicable today. As believers in Christ, we are called to "whip the world," to be *in the world but not of the world*. However, oftentimes, we find ways to coexist with the world and, in the end, **we let it affect us more than we affect it.** *The world usually ends up whipping us instead.*

It is essential to our Christian lives that we follow God's expectations, not to conform to this world's mold. By relying on His power, through the Holy Spirit, we can overcome the world's thinking and its godless ways, which are subservient to the superior wisdom and will of God.

Daily Reflection

Are you whipping the world or is the world whipping you? Have you separated yourself from its thinking and its ways, or do you look like, talk like, and act like the "tribes" around you?

Consider your entertainment, consider how you spend your time and money, and consider your values. Evaluate your views of the way things are and the way things should be. **Is your worldview becoming more godly or is your view of God becoming more worldly?**

Caedmon's Call had a song years ago with these words. I have never forgotten them. "This world has nothing for you, and this world has everything, all that you could ever want but nothing that you need." Don't let it drag you down! Rise above it and be a world-changer, in your own sphere of influence, wherever it is that God has placed you.

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2).

The Perfect Place

March 28 — *Joshua 18:1-19:48*

Day 87 — 278 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

The rest of the land of Canaan was divided among the tribes of Israel. So far this week, besides the two and a half tribes that settled on the east of the Jordan, Joshua has parceled out land to Judah, Ephraim, and the other half of Manasseh. Today, Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Isaachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan all received their inheritance.

Although there was not a great deal of substance in today's passage, most of it being details about the borders and cities of each territory, there is, I think, a great truth here. Each of these sections was given by the will of God through the casting of lots. In other words, **God decided which territory was suitable for the needs of each tribe.** He had in mind all along where He would like for them to be and the parcel of land that would best work for them. Now it was just a matter of mapping out the borders and getting people in the right places.

Why would we expect anything less from our God? We've read about the orderliness of His creation, we've witnessed His minute details in describing the building of the Tabernacle and its furnishings, we've seen how intricate His sacrificial system was, and we've noticed His perfect plan for the arrangement of Israel's camping and marching procedures. Why should we be surprised that God had Canaan all mapped out and that He had a perfect place in mind for His people?

Daily Reflection

Just as He did then, the Lord places people exactly where He wants them today, which means that **He had in mind the perfect place for you.** He ordained the very place where you would be born, where you would grow up, where you would live, where you would go to school, where you would attend church, and where you

would work. He knows everything there is to know about you. Not only does He know it, but He knew it before time began; and *He had a plan in mind for you, a perfect plan with a perfect place.*

You are where you are because God has put you there. He has asked you to be His ambassador, His representative, to the world around you, in your neighborhood, in your workplace, in your church, and in your family. He has carved out a sphere of influence for you, but are you using your opportunities to influence others for Him?

Are you making the most of the place God has allotted to you? Are you being a good steward of your "inheritance"? Or are you restless and resentful about God's place in life for you? Are you always wishing to be somewhere else?

Don't waste your time complaining about God's allotment for your life; rather get busy being an ambassador. *God does nothing by accident; He is intentional and purposeful.* Your gifts, your circumstances, and your experiences are perfect for the time and place where He has stationed you. **Be grateful and get to work!**

Rest on Every Side

March 29 — *Joshua 19:49-21:45*

Day 88 — 277 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

The Israelites gave Joshua and his descendants an inheritance for his work and leadership among them; he requested the city of Timnath-serah. Then, the people identified the six cities of refuge and the forty-eight cities of the Levites (since they did not receive a territory like the other tribes), all of which were given by God to Moses before they entered Canaan.

“So the Lord gave to Israel all the land He had sworn to give their ancestors and they conquered it and settled there; and, the Lord gave them rest on every side, just as He had solemnly promised their ancestors. None of their enemies could stand against them, for the Lord helped them conquer all their enemies. All of the good promises that the Lord had given Israel came true” (21:43-45).

It’s important to note here that *God keeps His promises*. **Whatever He says He will do; He will bring to pass.** It was true in the day of Israel, and it is true today. However, now that Israel was in the land and Joshua had completed his call to war, I’d like to focus on the fact that God gave His people *rest on every side*.

First, notice that it is **God who gives us rest; we do not make rest for ourselves.** We cannot in our own strength make the life that we want or need for ourselves; we are insufficient in our strength to complete such a task. But God, who has unlimited resources and power, is completely sufficient to meet our needs. When we “delight ourselves in the Lord, He fulfills the desires of our heart” (*Psalms 37:4*).

Second, notice that God gave His people *rest on every side*. I found this interesting in light of the fact that Israel did not drive out all of the tribes of Canaanites. In other words, they still had enemies around them, yet God gave them *rest on*

every side in spite of their enemies. The “rest of God” is not a convenient life. It’s not a comfortable life or even a happy life. **Even though we are surrounded by turmoil, trials, and troubles, God can give us rest** — which comes in the form of contentment, peace, and joy — in the midst of the chaos and craziness!

Daily Reflection

Describe your life right now. Does it reflect rest or restlessness? Explain your answer.

Have you recognized that your rest comes from the Lord, or are you still running the rat race, trying to chase down rest yourself?

The Lord is your protection, your provision, and your peace. All you need to do is “cease striving, know that He is God” (*Ps. 46:10*), and rest.

“The Name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are safe” (*Proverbs 18:10*).

The Jealousy of God

Today In Your Reading...

The tribes of Israel from beyond the Jordan returned to their homes. Remember they swore to Moses that they would come to help the other tribes conquer Canaan. They had indeed kept their word, and Joshua now released them from their vow. However, they got themselves into hot water when they erected an altar at the border, and the other tribes mistook it as an altar to another god. Civil war was averted when they explained their reasons for building the altar, which was to remind them and their descendants that they serve one God and will always remain faithful to Him.

Then, at the close of the book of *Joshua*, the great leader gathered everyone together to give his farewell address. In that address, he reminded Israel, "Be careful to love the Lord your God. If you turn away from Him and intermarry with the nations remaining among you (which would cause them to worship other gods), they will be a snare to you and a trap, a pain in your side and a thorn in your eyes, and you will be wiped out from this good land..." (23:11-13).

Next, Joshua challenged the people to "choose whom they would serve," the false gods of the nations or the One True God who had brought them this far. As the people swore their allegiance to God, Joshua warned them, "You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy and jealous God..." (24:19).

What does it mean that God is jealous? Typically, that word has negative connotations, but *there are times when one can be right in his or her jealousy*. For example, in marriage, when a woman is caught in an adulterous affair, would not her husband be right to be jealous? Yes, of course. In the same way, God had "betrothed" Himself to the people of Israel; they were bonded together in a covenant. But, as we will find in

our reading, and as Joshua prophesied, God's "wife," the chosen nation of Israel, will commit adultery with other gods, and cause Him to become jealous for her. Likewise, as we in Christ have covenanted ourselves together with Him, **we must be diligent to love Him with all our heart, making sure that He is the lone receiver of our affection.**

Daily Reflection

List here some of your "loves" in life. Name some of your favorite people, possessions, activities, and aspects of life.

How can you ensure that none of these "loves" in your life will eclipse your love for the Lord?

Beware of idols in your life, other loves that will compete for your attention. **Christ is your first love.** Guard your "marriage" and daily recommit to your vow of faithfulness. The Lord is a jealous God. He has given you His affection. Will you give Him yours?

Avoiding Apostasy

March 31 — *Judges 1:1-3:6*

Today In Your Reading...

We began the book of *Judges*, which captured the apostasy (falling away) of Israel after the death of Joshua. As a result, God fulfilled the warnings He had given them before they entered Canaan. The various tribes, which were not removed from the land, were used by God in His judgment. They grew to power, subdued the Israelites, and forced them to slave labor. Then, God's people regretted their mistakes, repented of their sins, and desired to return to the Lord. Because of their change of heart, God would send a deliverer, whom they called a judge, one who was blessed by the Spirit and who would have the power to rescue them from their slavery. But, "when the judge died, the people returned to their corrupt ways, behaving worse than those who had lived before them. They followed other gods, worshiping and bowing down to them, and they refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways" (2:19).

This cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, deliverance, and restoration repeated itself seven times. In the end, God would send fourteen judges. This ridiculous cycle causes even the most casual observer to ask the question why. Why did this keep happening, and why couldn't they break the cycle? The answer comes in the key verse of the entire book — *Judges 17:6*, "In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."

What happened to Israel happens to us today. *When moral authority or moral restraint is removed, we oftentimes do not sense an obligation to do what's good or right.* In essence, **we do what comes naturally; and what we do naturally is sin and rebel against God.**

We will see, throughout the course of this year, that, apart from Christ and the internal governing work of the Holy Spirit, **man is incapable**

of governing himself. Thus, if he cannot govern himself, then he is in need of someone else to govern him, someone who exerts strong external force or restraint. In the case of Israel, they had Moses for 40 years and Joshua for nearly as long. They had someone holding them accountable for their actions; but as soon as these men died, the restraints were gone and the people reverted to their perverted ways. This truth explains why they behaved well when a judge called them to account, but they repeated their wickedness after he or she was gone.

Daily Reflection

The Lord has given you a conscience, to know right from wrong. How are you doing at following it, particularly when no one is watching?

The Period of the Judges reminds us that **we all need accountability.** *It is never good to live life on your own, apart from other godly influences.* Describe here those who help keep you accountable to following the Lord. How has it helped your relationship with Him?

Ordinary Heroes

April 1 — *Judges 3:31-6:40*

Day 91 — 274 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

The Lord used three judges to deliver His people from slavery — Shamgar, Deborah, and Gideon. Notice that Shamgar only had one verse written about him. Still, he must have been a stud. “He killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad” (3:31). That’s impressive in my book, but for some reason his story was left out of Scripture. Tomorrow, we will focus on Gideon. Today, let’s consider Deborah’s ministry.

The period of the judges was an unfortunate cycle that ensnared the Israelites for many generations. *Their national stability and prosperity were directly linked to their faithfulness to the covenant and commandments of God.* When the people abandoned the Lord for idolatry and immorality, then they forfeited their peace and protection.

At certain times, God would raise up *uncommon heroes* called judges to deliver His people from their suffering. Of the dozen or so judges, all but one were men. During the days when Jabin, the King of Canaan, oppressed the Israelites with his iron cavalry, it was two women, Deborah and Jael, whom God empowered to deliver them. It was Deborah the prophetess who challenged Barak and his army to face Jabin’s commander Sisera; and, though Barak defeated Sisera’s army, it was Jael who ultimately “pegged” the commander in the end.

*A common misconception is that God only uses those “in the ministry” to do His work, or He only chooses to use extraordinary speakers, exceptional leaders, or those with “super-human” powers to become heroes in the faith. The truth is that, most of the time, **God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things** for Him. Though He does call out His Shamgars every now and then, *it is the ordinary heroes that achieve the majority of God’s work on earth.**

Not one of His followers is unnecessary or overlooked. Every person who loves God and who is faithful to Him can and will be used for His good purposes — the shy teenager, the unseen person in the cubicle, even the forgotten mother and home-builder. **In God’s plan, all of us are useful and important.**

Daily Reflection

Another common misconception is that not only do you have to be someone important but *you have to do something noteworthy to make an impact for God’s kingdom.* This is also a lie. **All you need to do is what you know to do**, be a light for the Lord in ordinary ways, wherever it is that He has placed you. If you are faithful to do your part, **God will provide opportunities for you to make a difference.**

What are some ways that you can be a light for the Lord where you are?

God takes common faithfulness and produces uncommon results. While He does expect you to be “strong and courageous,” to stand out, to speak up, and to identify yourself as one of His, **it is His role to multiply your words and actions.**

“Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).