

Sermon Outline

“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”: A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

THE ORDER OF CALEB: STRONG TO THE VERY END! (JOSHUA 14:1-14)

- I. Introduction to the Inheritances in Canaan (Joshua 14:1-5)**
 - A. Having considered in detail the inheritance of the lands east of the Jordan, the beginning of chapter 14 brings us to the inheritance of the mainland of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua.
 - B. Verse 2 tells us how the inheritances were allotted to the respective tribes: “Their inheritance was by lot, just as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes.”
 - 1. At this juncture in time, the Lord wanted lots to be used as a way of discerning his specific will for very specific occasions.
 - 2. In this case, it was the allotting of the land to the tribes of Israel.
 - C. But lots were not used even in ancient Israel as a general way of knowing the will of God for every situation.
 - 1. Instead, God calls his people to obey his written Word.
 - 2. In those cases where there may be two or more good options available, God wants us to use wisdom.
 - 3. God does not call his people to use lots as a means of deciding which job to take, which school to attend, whom to marry, or even which theological position is right.
 - 4. Instead, God calls us to study his Word—and use our brains!
 - 5. We must treat the use of lots in the Old Testament as time-sensitive, case-specific methods of guidance.
 - D. Yet, the use of lots demonstrates that God is sovereign even over those events that we think took place by chance.
 - E. Verse 3 momentarily redirects us to the prophet Moses.
 - F. Verse 4 may be meant to tell us how the number of twelve tribes is retained even after the Levites had been taken out of the picture, and even if Joseph himself did not yield a tribe under his name.

—Joseph’s sons Manasseh and Ephraim (i.e., Jacob’s grandsons) made up the eleventh and twelfth tribes of Israel and of the land (Hubbard Jr., *Joshua*, 404).

- G. But verse 5 is the key statement here: “The people of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses; they allotted the land.”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How, according to v 2, was the land allotted to the tribes? (2) Are we to use lots today? (3) What may have been the purpose of v 4? (4) According to v 5, who is the ultimate allotter of the land?

II. Caleb the Kennizite Comes to Joshua (Joshua 14:6)

- A. Beginning in verse 6 and going all the way to the end of this chapter, we come to the case of Caleb the Kenizzite.
- B. “Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal.”
1. Judah was one of the tribes of Israel.
 2. Gilgal was where Israel had their base camp.
 3. When the Judahites came to Joshua, Caleb came with them.
- C. Who was Caleb?
1. Caleb and Joshua were amongst the reconnaissance team sent by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan back in Numbers 13.
 2. Caleb and Joshua were the only two spies who had faith in the Lord’s ability to help Israel overcome their enemies in the land.
 3. When we see Caleb approaching Joshua here, we’re seeing a reunion of two companions.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Which tribe came to Joshua at Gilgal? (2) Who was Caleb? How was he related to Joshua in past history?

III. Caleb Recounts Moses’ Promise to Joshua (Joshua 14:6-9)

- A. Caleb reminds Joshua about all that had gone before.
- B. Then comes the basis of Caleb’s request: “And Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.’”

—Caleb is reminding Joshua of the land that Moses had promised him.

C. To find the terms of this promise, we go back to the Torah. Deuteronomy 1:34-36.

1. Numbers 32:10-12:

And the LORD's anger was kindled on that day, and he swore, saying, 'Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me, none *except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite* and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.'

2. Deuteronomy 1:34-36:

'And the LORD heard your words and was angered, and he swore, 'Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers, *except Caleb the son of Jephunneh*. He shall see it, and to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has trodden, because he has wholly followed the LORD!'"

D. When Caleb says that Moses had promised him land, he wasn't making things up!

E. Caleb, who is now far advanced in years, has yet to come into his promised land.

1. His request may be motivated by a desire to claim his land before he dies.

2. To put it in more secular language, this is an old man who has a few dreams left to be fulfilled before he dies.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Caleb remind Joshua? (2) Which texts speak of Caleb's rightful claim to the land?

IV. Caleb Recounts the Lord's Mercy to Him (Joshua 14:10, 11)

A. After recounting his past faithfulness to the Lord, Caleb goes on to tell Joshua about how the Lord had been gracious to him all these years.

—“And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old” (v 10).

- B. But in spite of his age, Caleb could still go on to say, “I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming.”

—Caleb is the quintessential war hero, the soldier’s soldier, ever ready to dive into action!

- C. Caleb is an excellent example of an earthy spirituality.

1. Earthy spirituality is not loving the world in a pagan, idolatrous way.
2. An earthy spirituality recognizes that God has given us physical bodies by which to serve him; that we do not serve God apart from the physical realities of this earth.

- D. Yet, we remember that Caleb’s emphasis is not on physical fitness per se—but on the Lord’s grace.

1. He says that it was the Lord who had sustained him all these years, not his weekly jogging routine: “And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive...”
2. Health, physical fitness, like all other things, are gifts from the Lord.
3. It is ultimately the Lord our God, our heavenly Father, who cares for us and maintains us.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Caleb tell Joshua after recounting his past faithfulness? (2) Who was the Source of Caleb’s strength?

V. Caleb’s Request (Joshua 14:12)

- A. Caleb requests Joshua for his land; or perhaps more precisely; *he requests Joshua to let him take the land.*

- B. But lest we think that Caleb is only in this for himself, consider what else he says: “for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.”

1. Caleb was the soldier’s soldier—concerned for his people and his mission.

- C. Beneath that very bold exterior is a quiet trust in the Lord: “It *may* be that the LORD will be with me...”
- D. Caleb is an example of what it means to be a persevering Christian.—When we look at Caleb, we see what it means to be a saint who stays strong in the Lord to the very end and finishes his race well and with excellence.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What was Caleb’s request to Joshua? (2) How did we know that Caleb was humble? (3) How is Caleb an example to us?

VI. Some Marks of a Persevering Saint

- A. So what is a persevering saint like? Looking at Caleb son of Jephunneh, we can discern three or four important marks of a persevering saint.
- B. First mark: *Like Caleb, a saint who perseveres in faithfulness to the Lord is one who ever lives before the glory and the lordship of God.*
 - 1. Look at what Caleb says:
 - a. Verse 8: “...yet I wholly followed the LORD my God.”
 - b. Verse 12: “It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.”
 - 2. Caleb sees himself, not first as some great war hero, but as a humble servant of the Lord.
 - 3. Whenever Christians no longer walk with the Lord, it’s primarily because something else has replaced the Lord God in their hearts.—The secular heart-religion of human autonomy.
 - 4. If we want to remain in the faith, we cannot simply focus on our act of believing or even our own good resolve, because doing so causes us to focus in on ourselves again—a sure recipe for despair!
 - 5. Instead, we focus on the One who inspires our love, who deserves our faith. We rest our eyes on the Lord.—Or as Paul says, “Set your mind on things that are above, not on things on that are on earth” (Col 3:2).
- C. Second mark: *Like Caleb, the persevering saint is one who lives in the awareness of God’s sustaining love.*
 - 1. Consider:

- a. Verse 10: “And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive....”
- b. Verse 12: “It may be that the LORD will be with me...”
- 2. All these statements imply a great degree of reverence for God. They also imply an awareness of God’s sustaining and empowering presence in his life—and the ongoing need for that presence.
- 3. Thus, the persevering saint is one who rests and trusts in God’s sustaining love and presence.
- 4. Of course, living in the awareness of God’s presence is what keeps us alive.
 - a. We are sustained by the grace of God.
 - b. And yet, in terms of helping our own perseverance, we need to live knowing that we are embraced by God in Jesus Christ; and that God will never leave us or forsake us, even in our darkest, loneliest times.
- D. The third mark: *Like Caleb, the persevering saint fights for the Kingdom to the very end.*
 - 1. Caleb’s words in verse 12 are priceless!

So now *give me* this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and *I shall drive them out* just as the LORD said.

- 2. Until the war is over, Christians will always need to be on guard and struggle for the Kingdom.
- 3. How exactly do we fight for the Kingdom?
 - a. Today, the fight is obviously not a political warfare that sets the Church against nation states.
 - b. The fight is primarily a *spiritual* warfare on a threefold front.
 - i. The spiritual powers of darkness that rule this world
 - ii. The secular, antichrist values of the world
 - iii. Our own remaining sinful habits that prevent us from serving God fully.
 - c. We fight *by...*
 - i. holding firmly to the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the good news that Christ our Lord has fulfilled the

- Law of God on our behalf, that he has died for our sins, and that he has been raised for our salvation.
- ii. holding on to the Word of God, cherishing the Testimonies of God in our hearts; making sure that we allow the Word of God to replace all the false ideas that try to control our affections.
- d. But we must also fight in a positive way.
- i. The world must not only know what we Christians are *against*—they must know what it is that we are *for*, what we truly and deeply *love*.
 - ii. Too often, the impression we give outsiders is that we are against everything that is enjoyable and delightful.
—We are known by what we hate!
 - iii. Contrary to popular opinion, we Christians are not first of all in love with good behavior and order.
 - iv. We don't hate the naughty things of the world just for the sake of hating them.
 - v. We hate those things because we love the Lord our God.
 - vi. We love the Lord our God because God alone is *life*, and *love*, and *beauty*, and *strength* in all of their perfection—the very things the world claims to value!
 - vii. We must win the heart of the world by showing them what it is that we Christians truly love. We love the Lord our God and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, because whom he has given to us.
- E. The fourth mark: *Like Caleb, the persevering Christian is one who keeps the prize of eternal rest and victory always before him or her.*

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are the marks of the persevering saint we can learn from Caleb? (2) Why is it important that we not focus on our own faith and acts of believing? (3) How do we keep the Lord's glory ever before us? (4) How do we keep the awareness of God's sustaining love with us? What practical steps can we take? (5) What is the nature of our spiritual warfare today? Who are our enemies? (6) How do we conduct our spiritual war?

VII. The Reward of Persevering Faith (Joshua 14:13-15)

- A. Consider verses 13-15.

Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, *because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel*. Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba. (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim.) And the land had rest from war.

- B. What keeps us persevering in the faith is the knowledge that we have a prize waiting for us at the end.
- C. This prize is eternal rest and eternal victory over all our foes.
- D. For Caleb, the reward was the region of Hebron. For us, it is the new heavens and the new earth.

Friends, let us not give up being Christian. Let us be the order of Caleb. There are still giants to be fought in the land. There are still dragons to be slain. You are allowed to grow old. But you are not allowed to lose that childlike sense of adventure, sanctified by the grace of God! Our heavenly Father is with us. Let us fight on and gain the prize which is already ours in Jesus Christ our Lord. Put away your unbelief. Put away your cherished sins. Don't let the world tell you what God can or cannot do. *You* are a son of God. *You* listen to the Father for yourself in his Word. And *you* encourage your brothers and sisters with the Word of the Father. And together, we will make it home.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the reward that awaits the saint at the end of time? (2) How do we keep the prize of glory in our minds? What practical steps can we take?