

22nd May 2019.

BEWARE OF THE DANGERS OF COMPLACENCY.

Joshua 18, 19.

Of the definitions of ‘Complacency’, that, that has it as a feeling of contented self-satisfaction, especially when unaware of upcoming trouble. Or also, an instance of self-satisfaction is what we’ll have tonight, as it’s what was portrayed by the other seven tribes of Israel that were yet to receive their land allotments.

Having already learnt from the others to beware of the failure of complete victory, as we have often noted that the book of Joshua illustrates what it means to move into and live out the Spirit-filled life.

The people of Israel were set free from bondage in Egypt the night the blood was placed on the doorposts of their homes. We were also set free from bondage to the world by the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts of our hearts.

After they were set free, the people of Israel made their way to the Red Sea, where they were baptized when the waters parted (1Cor.10:2) just as the baptism of believers signifies death and resurrection to a whole new way of living.

When their faith faltered shortly thereafter, the Israelites found themselves wandering in the wilderness for an entire generation—approximately forty years.

That can happen to you and me as well. We’re born again, baptized in water, but then we get distracted. Oh, we’re still Christians, but we’re wandering in the wilderness, swatting flies, and or scratching around like chicken. Things are dry, not like they used to be, - not like they’re supposed to be. We wander and we wonder sometimes year after year until, like the Israelites, we come to a second baptism—the Jordan River, which speaks of the baptism in the Spirit.

A new generation came to those waters, and as they obeyed the command of the Lord to put the soles of their feet into the water, they entered into the Promised Land. When you and I engage our souls and say, “Lord, I want to step out. I want to press in. I want to take hold of all You have for me,” a new dimension of spiritual life begins. The baptism in the Spirit transforms those who were wandering and weak into those who are dynamic and fruitful.

We’re coming to the point where we’re saying, “Lord, I love You, but I’m tired of the dryness of my soul. I’m tired of wandering around aimlessly.

I want You to take control. I want to see Your Spirit come upon me and flow through me. I'm going to do whatever You tell me to do. I'm going to step out. I'm going to take a risk and begin to press in to what You say is available for me this very day." As we receive by faith the empowering of the Spirit, we enter into the Promised Land—a land filled with milk, honey, and grapes a bunch carried by two men! That's where the people of Israel are at this point in the book of Joshua.

Like we are told in chapter 18:1.....

The entire congregation set up the tabernacle at Shiloh, a central location, where it would remain for hundreds of years until King David would move it to Jerusalem.

Oh, there are battles to fight and wars to wage—but it's a place of fruitfulness and abundance. We continue on with the land being divided because the Spirit-filled life is not only about moving in and enjoying the fruit, but about responsibilities as well. There is work for us to do because the Holy Spirit is given for the purpose of impacting the world around us. And then like them, start having cold feet.

We have already seen that of the half tribe of Manasseh, who struggled to consider as theirs the hilly forested land and valleys with iron chariots of war. Now we read on from vs 2-10....

It was evidently up to the leaders of the tribes to approach Joshua and say, "We're here to receive our lot, our inheritance." Yet at this point, seven of the twelve tribes had not yet done so. Why? I suggest it was that, without a specific region appropriated to them, they would have no battles to fight. They could be on the coast for a while and then go into the valley of Jezreel or on to Jerusalem. Whenever difficulties arose, they could simply pack up and move. And there are Christians who are just like them. There are people who have left the wilderness of carnality and who have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They've entered the Promised Land of the Spirit-filled life, and are experiencing something of abundance—yet they don't want to be locked in to a specific territory, a specific congregation. "I want to attend this meeting over here and that church over there," they say—until the pastor makes them angry and they head in a different direction. "When the building project is complete, I'll be back," they say. Although people with this mindset might think they're being led by the Spirit, in reality, they're simply neither accountable to nor responsible for anyone.

They're involved as is comfortable for them, but if they're asked to do something that stretches them, they'll leave. Such 'Christians' you may be shocked to find, don't know the senior Pastor's names...

The majority of the tribes failed to claim their inheritance. And, sadly, Joshua's question still needs to be asked in our generation: "When are you going to quit floating around, sink some roots, put your hand to the plow, and claim territory for the kingdom?"

Reading on from 11 through to chapter 19:51.....

Looking at vs 50...Like Caleb and his daughter, Joshua asked, and received that that he'd asked for. Even as we are exhorted in Matt. 7:7-11 and perhaps appropriately for us tonight Luke 11:9-13, which comes after a greatly inspiring parable of the persistent friend.

Here is a precept in three words to the same implication, Ask, Seek, Knock; that is, in one word, "Pray; pray often; pray with sincerity and seriousness; pray, and pray again; make conscience of prayer, and be constant in it; make a business of prayer, and be earnest in it. Ask, as a beggar asks alms."..... Those that would be rich in grace, must betake themselves to the poor trade of begging, and they shall find it a thriving trade. "Ask; represent your wants and burdens to God, and refer yourselves to him for support and supply, according to his promise. Ask as a traveller asks the way; to pray is to enquire of God. Seek, as for a thing of value that we have lost, or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls. Seek by prayer. Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door."

We must not only ask but seek; we must second our prayers with our endeavors; we must, in the use of the appointed means, seek for that which we ask for, or else we tempt God. God gives knowledge and grace to those that search the scriptures, and wait at Wisdom's gates; and power against sin to those that avoid the occasions of it.

We must not only ask, but knock; we must come to God's door, must ask importunately; not only pray, but plead and wrestle with God; we must seek diligently; we must continue knocking; must persevere in prayer, and in the use of means; must endure to the end in the duty.

Our labour in prayer, if indeed we do labour in it, shall not be in vain: where God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God; he shall give an answer of peace. The precept is threefold, ask, seek, knock; there is precept upon precept; but the promise is six-fold, line upon line, for our encouragement; because a firm belief of the promise would make us cheerful and constant in our obedience. The promise is made, and made so as exactly to answer the precept, Ask, and it shall be given you; not lent you, not sold you, but given you; and what is more free than gift? Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, whatever you ask, shall be given you, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more? It is but ask and have; you have not, because you ask not, or ask not aright: what is not worth asking is not worth having, and then it is worth nothing. Seek, and you shall find, and then you do not lose your labour; God is Himself found of those that seek him, and if we find Him we have enough. “Knock, and it shall be opened; the door of mercy and grace shall no longer be shut against you as enemies and intruders, but opened to you as friends and children. It will be asked, who is at the door? If you be able to say, a friend, or better, your child, and have the ticket of promise ready to produce in the hand of faith, do not doubt of admission. If the door be not opened at the first knock, continue instant in prayer; it is an affront to a friend to knock at his door, and then go away; though he tarry, yet wait.”

Yet with some addition, it is made to extend to all that pray aright; “Not only you my disciples shall receive what you pray for, but every one that asks, receives, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, they are all alike welcome to the throne of grace, if they come in faith: for God is no respecter of persons.” It is made so as to amount to a grant, in words of the present tense, which is more than a promise for the future. Every one that asks, not only shall receive, but receives; by faith, applying and appropriating the promise, we are actually interested and invested in the good promised: Conditional grants become absolute upon the performance of the condition; so here, he that asks, receives.

So taking it away with the words of Paul in 1 Cor.10:11 “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

Let us beware of the dangers of complacency.