

• *Pressing on*

Many Christians are sluggish and lazy about pressing on to their inheritance. They do not realise how great is the prize to be gained, nor how impossible it is to please God without persistent, diligent, inheriting faith. God is ready to work in our lives but Christians can fall into laziness.

1. God is ready to lead his people into inheritance

1. In Joshua 18, we discover first of all **the readiness of God to lead His people into inheritance**. God gives the people further guidance and leads them to move their base to Shiloh. ^{¶1} It was certainly God's decision. ^{¶2} It was as if God was moving into the centre of Israel; the rest of the allocating of inheritance would take place there.

¶1 18:1
 ¶2 see Jeremiah 7:12

God was ready to lead His people into their possessions. Before the tabernacle had been at Gilgal, and the allocation of land had taken place there. God had promised to dwell within His people. Now He was fulfilling His promise. The central area of Israel had been occupied and it was God's will to set up a sanctuary somewhere more central. Shiloh was in the heart of the country, in Ephraim's territory. It would remain as Israel's central sanctuary for over 350 years, until it was destroyed during the high-priesthood of Eli. Then the central sanctuary was transferred to Nob, ^{¶1} and later still to Gibeon, ^{¶2} and finally to Jerusalem.

¶1 1 Samuel 21:1
 ¶2 1 Kings 3:4

2. Seven reluctant tribes

2. God was ready but **the remaining seven tribes were reluctant to seek their inheritance**. ^{¶1} It seems they were diffident to take possession of their territories or even to have them assigned to them. The land was not totally free of pagans and to make use of the land being given to them might be easier said than done. Some were hesitant to separate and take possession of what had been assigned them. They were quite happy to stay where they were at Shiloh.

¶1 18:2

3. The leader's task to rouse the people

3. In such a situation **it is the task of a leader to rouse the people into seeking their inheritance**. Joshua speaks to them. ^{¶1} *'How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land...?'* It is something that could be said to many Christians: how long will you delay entering into your inheritance in Christ?

¶1 18:3

• *Action*

Joshua does not simply talk; he acts at once by rousing them to set about fulfilling their calling. The seven tribes are each to provide three men. They must explore the remaining land, dividing it into seven portions, and then they must report back to Joshua. ^{¶1} The other five tribes need not be involved at this point. ^{¶2} When the twenty-one surveyors return Joshua will cast lots to decide who gets what. ^{¶3} The Levites are not involved ^{¶4}; nor are the two and-a-half tribes who have their inheritance already. ^{¶5}

¶1 18:4–5a
 ¶2 18:5b
 ¶3 18:6
 ¶4 18:7a
 ¶5 18:7b

• *Obedience*

The twenty-one men do as they are instructed ^{¶1} and Joshua allocates the land to them by casting lots. ^{¶2}

¶1 18:8–9
 ¶2 18:10

In Joshua 18:11 to 19:51 we have the descriptions of each of the seven tribal territories. The tribe of Benjamin is described in 18:11–28. The northern border, ^{¶1} the western border ^{¶2}; the southern border, ^{¶3} the eastern border, ^{¶4} the eastern towns ^{¶5} and the western towns ^{¶6}

¶1 18:12–13
 ¶2 18:14
 ¶3 18:15–19
 ¶4 18:20
 ¶5 18:21–24
 ¶6 18:25–28

The Christians Inheritance

The ancient Israelite was set the task of possessing land and towns. For the Christian, 'inheriting the land' is fulfilled in the Christian's 'inheriting the kingdom' and 'inheriting the earth'. 'Blessed are the meek', said Jesus, 'because they shall inherit the earth'. ¹ The Christian's inheritance is not exclusively non-material, although in its beginnings it is a matter of experience of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Matthew 5:5

Is it possible to say what the Christian's 'inheritance' is in fuller detail? The New Testament gives us many hints. It certainly is not the Christian's initial-salvation; it is not being 'justified' by faith. And the Christian's inheritance is not heaven – although it is often taken that way. We do not have to enter into great conflict in order to be justified or in order to make heaven secure. 'Inheritance' is not 'justification by faith'; it is reward. It is reaping back from God what God wants to give us. We can break this down into some of its details.

1. Reaping from the Holy Spirit

• Defeating sins and weaknesses

• The Fruit of the Spirit

1. **The Christian's 'inheritance' consists of 'reaping from the Holy Spirit'**. It is partly spiritual wealth now, reaping from the Spirit. By faith and patience we inherit God's promises. And one aspect of what God is promising us is the fruit of the Spirit. As we battle and wage war to inherit what God wants to give us, we 'inherit' the blessings of the Holy Spirit. It is a battle. It is no surprise that Christians have often seen 'the Canaanites' that have to be defeated as sins and weaknesses that have to be exterminated as the Canaanites had to be exterminated. Our own sins are to be shown no mercy just as the Canaanites were shown no mercy.

Certainly if we insist on walking in the pathway of love, the remainder of the fruit of the Spirit will follow. We shall 'inherit' the land of joy, peace, self-control. We shall 'inherit' the kingdom, that is, experience the blessings of God's royal activities in our lives. If we sow to the Spirit we shall inherit something from the Spirit.

2. Fulfilling God's calling

2. There is more. **The Christian's 'inheritance' consists of a calling to an area of ministry and enablement to fulfil that calling.** The Christian not only has areas in his own character to conquer for God. He also has areas out in the wider world which he or she has to conquer for God. There is 'land' to be conquered, realms of society, kingdoms where Jesus is little known, regions where the will of Jesus must be done. Without inheriting faith it is impossible to please God.

Joshua's challenge

Joshua's challenge applies to us: *'How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land...?'*



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