

Joshua 15:20-63

Snatching Defeat from the Jaws of Victory

- 20 This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families:
- 21 The cities at the limits of the tribe of the children of Judah, toward the border of Edom in the South, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur,
- 22 Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah,
- 23 Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan,
- 24 Ziph, Telem, Bealoth,
- 25 Hazor, Hadattah, Kerioth, Hezron (which is Hazor),
- 26 Amam, Shema, Moladah,
- 27 Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet,
- 28 Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Bizjothjah,
- 29 Baalah, Ijim, Ezem,
- 30 Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah,
- 31 Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah,
- 32 Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities are twenty-nine, with their villages.
- 33 In the lowland: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,
- 34 Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam,
- 35 Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah,
- 36 Sharaim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim: fourteen cities with their villages;
- 37 Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad,
- 38 Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel,
- 39 Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon,
- 40 Cabbon, Lahmas, Kithlish,
- 41 Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities with their villages;
- 42 Libnah, Ether, Ashan,
- 43 Jiptah, Ashnah, Nezib,
- 44 Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine cities with their villages;
- 45 Ekron, with its towns and villages;
- 46 from Ekron to the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages;
- 47 Ashdod with its towns and villages, Gaza with its towns and villages -- as far as the Brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with its coastline.
- 48 And in the mountain country: Shamir, Jattir, Sochoh,
- 49 Dannah, Kirjath Sannah (which is Debir),
- 50 Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim,
- 51 Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities with their villages;
- 52 Arab, Dumah, Eshean,
- 53 Janum, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah,
- 54 Humtah, Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron), and Zior: nine cities with their villages;
- 55 Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah,
- 56 Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah,
- 57 Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities with their villages;
- 58 Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor,
- 59 Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon: six cities with their villages;
- 60 Kirjath Baal (which is Kirjath Jearim) and Rabbah: two cities with their villages.
- 61 In the wilderness: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah,
- 62 Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi: six cities with their villages.

63 As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

Have you ever met the kind of person who is constantly starting projects and only getting them half-way to completion? Their house is constantly half-way renovated, the car is always going to be half-way disassembled. Their books are always half-way read. Some of us would have to admit to knowing such a person *very well*.

Well it isn't just in the arena of mundane tasks and projects that this "git r half-way done" or "good enough for government work" attitude has prevailed. Historically there has always been a tendency within the church and with individuals to be content with only doing part of what God commands, of only accomplishing some of the things that he desires for us to do, to be content with a partial Reformation. For instance in England during the 16th century, great strides were made towards driving out all of the idolatry and unbiblical practice that had come in through Romanism, but eventually both the King and larger part of the institutional church essentially said, "this far and no further" we are tired of the battle to purify the church of Jesus Christ. We are not going to remove things like the Episcopal church government with its Bishops, we are not going to remove things like Vestments and Liturgy, in short we feel we have come far enough, changed enough, conformed enough to the bible. What is left of the old corruptions we judge to be harmless, and we believe now that a measure of latitude needs to be granted.

Therefore when forces within the church continued the struggle to continue the process of Reform, they were resisted, the pilgrims who settled in the Massachusetts bay area were actually made up of men and women who had grown sick of waiting for the English church to Reform. They figured almost 75 years was enough, and finally they left the country to plant a more fully Reformed church in the New World. The struggle continued in England however and eventually that resulted in full-blown civil war.

Now in this list of 113 towns and villages we have two poignant reminders of how Israel was content to leave much of what the Lord had exhorted them to do unfinished. What had he told them:

***Deut. 20:16 "But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive,
17 "but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you,
18 "lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.***

And yet in verse 63 of this chapter we have the frank admission - ***63 As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.***

They not only didn't take Jerusalem and drive out the Jebusites as God had commanded, at the time Joshua was written, probably during the time of the Judges or at the latest at the beginning of the time of the Kings, the people of Judah were actually dwelling in Jerusalem under their control and presumably a synergistic mingling of their culture and their religion, the very thing that God had feared, was going on.

But that isn't the only disaster implied in these verses, there is an even more serious one. If we break down the cities we see 4 major geographical areas listed:

- 1) *Towns in the Negev (southern desert) v. 21-32*
- 2) *The Shephelah (lowland hills to the west between the coastal cities and mountains) v. 33-47*
- 3) *The Hill Country v. 48-60*
- 4) *Wilderness (the desert towards the dead sea) v. 61-62*

Did you see near the end of category 2 any names that might prove to be a potential embarrassment had they been mentioned as being part of Judah's inheritance during the time of say Saul or David?

Verses 45-47 45 Ekron, with its towns and villages;
 46 from Ekron to the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages;
 47 Ashdod with its towns and villages, Gaza with its towns and villages -- as far as the Brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with its coastline.

This area was called the Philistine Pentapolis – The Jews failed utterly to subdue this area and it was to become a thorn in their side.

Now to be fair, we do read in Judges 1:18 that they captured a few of these cities for a while, but for instance, one of the primary Philistine cities Ashdod was never captured and the Philistines were thus able to take the cities back.

18 Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory.
 19 So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron.

This had hugely negative effects, not only because it meant that they couldn't control the Shephelah and some of the best farm and grazing land, but it also meant for instance, that some of the tribes were literally right up against their hated enemies. The tribe that had the worst time with this was Dan.

Palmer Robertson points out why: ***“Part of the original inheritance of the tribe of Dan lay in this area, which meant that this small tribe had little peace. Living so close to their archenemies meant that this tribe constantly faced pressures to compromise. So it is not surprising to find Samson of the tribe of Dan wandering a few hundred yards down the Sorek valley to Timnah where he found a Phillistine girl he wanted to marry.”***

Eventually the tribe of Dan got so sick of being pinned to the unfarmable hill country, they abandoned their inheritance and set off to take an area not allotted to them in the North. By the time they left however, the book of Judges indicates to us that they were firmly established in idolatrous worship practices.

Did this need to have happened? Not at all! Most of the land had been subdued, in the story of Caleb we have an indication that even the most difficult of cities – filled with Giant Anakim could be subdued if only they had set their mind to it. The Lord himself had promised he would drive them out, As Calvin puts it: ***“Therefore, it was owing entirely to their own sluggishness that they did not make themselves masters of the city of Jerusalem. This they were not able to do; but their own torpor, their neglect of the divine command from a love of ease, were the real obstacles.”***

And lest we forget God's people are either going forward or falling back, their failure meant that idolatry and compromise prospered, until finally the Lord's patience was exhausted in Judges 2:1 and he said unto them at a place named Bochim which means *weeping*:

NKJ Judges 2:1 Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.

2 'And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?

3 "Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' "

Those Corruptions multiplied during the period of the Judges until they result in a full blown civil war against the tribe of Benjamin.

What is the great application to us?:

Well as a church, and as people we are not called by God to a partial reformation – God does not want us to waver between two opinions, he does not as we heard this morning want part of us...

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This will irritate some – Will Perkins... Why must you be so precise?

The church in America has for too long been adopting a greater and greater latitude to the point where to be honest we are looking disturbingly like the culture.

“This passage is deserving of notice: we ought to learn from it to make rigorous trial of our strength in attempting to accomplish the commands of God, and not to omit any opportunity, lest while we are idly resting the door may be shut. A moderate delay might have been free from blame; but a long period of effeminate ease in a manner rejected the blessing which God was ready to bestow.”