

Jos219 – Grow Where You’re Planted – Joshua 17:14-18

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “Grow Where You’re Planted.” We’re in Joshua Chapter 17 and we’re looking at verses 14-18.

You can begin to take possession of the Promised Life in Christ, right now. Today. Nothing needs to change for you to begin to take possession of the Promised Life. You can begin to take possession of the Promised Life right where you’re at today by committing to grow where you are planted. When I say “grow” I am referring to “growing in Christ.”

To “Grow in Christ” means to increase your capacity for Jesus Christ in your life which increases your possession of the Promised Life. Today we are going to focus on three areas that you can begin to grow in right now and right where you are at in order to begin “*Taking Possession of the Promised Life*”

#1) Your Genuine Relationship with the Lord (*Foundation*)

#2) Your Faith in Action

#3) Your Obedience to Drive Out the enemy

If we will begin to grow in these three areas right where we’re planted we will begin to take possession of the Promised Life in Christ.

Let’s pray. Lord Jesus, that’s what we want. We want a re-frame. We want a re-boot. This world and our flesh have convinced us the Promised Life is about stuff and things that are kindling for the fire. Make us know the Promised Life is about you, Jesus. It’s about a genuine relationship with you; it’s about walking in victory, in faith, in action. It’s about walking in obedience to drive out the enemy, to walk wholly and closely and in unity with you. Show us that, illustrate that for us, through your Word in Joshua, today, we pray, in your name, Jesus, amen.

Wherever you find yourself right now you can begin to grow in these three key areas of taking possession of the Promised Life.

- 1) You can grow in your RELATIONSHIP with the Lord right now, right where you’re at today.
- 2) You can grow in the exercising of your FAITH right now, right where you’re at today.
- 3) You can grow in your OBEDIENCE to drive out the enemy right now, right where you’re at today.

You can grow in Christ right where you're planted.

There's one other thing I want to encourage you in before we get to our text today. It's that word "planted" in "*grow where you're planted.*" I want to give you strong encouragement to be careful saying, "God put me where I'm at today."

Maybe he did – maybe he didn't. Some of us are where we are at right now because we have followed the Lord in faith and obedience. Some of us are where we are at right now because of our own sinful or self-centered choices. Most of us are where we are at right now because of a combination of the two.

But, wherever you find yourself "planted" today, you can begin to grow in capacity for Christ in your life and in doing so you can begin to take possession of the Promised Life that God has for you – right now – right where you are at.

So we are in the section of Joshua where God is allotting the specific areas of the Promised Land to the twelve tribes. In this allotting of the Promised Land there are some great lessons about *how* God is calling us to grow where we are planted. But it's funny how many lessons in God's Word are lessons in what *not* to do... today is one of those lessons.

So we pick it up in Joshua 17:14.

Joshua 17:14(A) (NLT)

14 The descendants of Joseph came to Joshua . . .

Let's stop right there because it's important that we know who these "descendants of Joseph" are.

Look down at Joshua 17:17.

Joshua 17:17 (NLT)

***17 Then Joshua said to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph* . . .**

So, we are talking about two of the twelve Tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. But do you remember *how* the twelve tribes of Israel were created? Abraham had Isaac – Isaac had Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel and his twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel.

But Ephraim and Manasseh were not sons of Jacob (Israel) they were sons of Joseph and Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob. Do you remember the "Coat of Many Colors?" That

was Joseph, Jacob's next to youngest son, and Jacob (Israel) was always "double blessing" Joseph. But the "double blessing" is supposed to go to the eldest son, which was Ruben. But Ruben had slept with one of his father's concubines which enraged Jacob and cost Ruben his birth-right, which (among other things) includes a double blessing and a double inheritance. And so the birth-right of the double blessing went to Joseph – the favorite son – though he was eleventh in order.

So when Jacob was dying he called all twelve of his sons in, along with Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. And in Genesis 48:5 Jacob says to Joseph,

Genesis 48:5 (NLT)

5 "Now I am claiming as my own sons these two boys of yours, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born here in the land of Egypt before I arrived. They will be my sons, just as Reuben and Simeon are.

So Jacob elevates his grandsons (Joseph's sons) Ephraim and Manasseh to full sonship status thereby giving Joseph's descendants a "double blessing" making two tribes that are the descendants of Joseph. But it still totals twelve tribes in the land because the Tribe of Levi got no land inheritance because the Lord was their inheritance.

Now, why is this important? Because although there are a ton of great lessons in the history of the twelve sons of Jacob (who became the twelve Tribes of Israel) the lesson for today is that Ephraim and Manasseh became spoiled brats because of their special treatment. And their tribes continued to have an "entitled" attitude, kind of like western Christians have that "entitled" attitude (like God owes us something).

So now as we head back to Joshua 17 you'll understand the background to the problem. We read again Joshua 17:14.

Joshua 17:14 (NLT)

14 The descendants of Joseph (Ephraim & Manasseh) came to Joshua and asked, "Why have you given us only one portion of land as our homeland when the Lord has blessed us with so many people?"

The NKJ reads at the end... *since we are a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?*

The word "great" here actually means "great in number but the wording of the NKJ gives a good sense of their attitude.

“Hey, we’re Ephraim & Manasseh – we’re the special ones – why have you only given us ONE portion . . .”

The truth is – that wasn’t true. Ephraim and Manasseh were given three huge portions of land. It’s hard to explain, so let me try to show you a map to give you an idea of what they’re complaining about.

First, you see the huge section given to East Manasseh (east of the Jordan River). Then the huge section given to West Manasseh (that’s who is whining here.) And right below it, a huge section of land for Ephraim which was almost equally as large. Where is this land? It’s in the very heart of Canaan. It goes all the way from the coast up to the lowlands to the mountains and then back to the Jordan Valley, the most fertile ground in all the land. Look at how West Manasseh stretches down the Jordan Valley. That’s the best, most fertile soil and Ephraim is right in there with them. Half of them get half the land on the other side, and they come discontent and whining.

So, with all three of those huge sections of land, Ephraim and Manasseh come to Joshua to complain about their inheritance in the Promised Land. And to make matters worse, Joshua is from the tribe of Ephraim. And so they’re saying, *“Hey, Cousin . . . What’s up? You need to stretch out God’s plan a bit here cause God’s idea here is not good enough for us . . .”*

Immediately Ephraim and Manasseh were consumed with discontent. “How am I supposed to begin living the Promised Life with just *this* from God?”

Have you ever caught yourself saying that to God? “How am I supposed to begin to live the Promised Life with *just this*?”

The answer to that struggle is simple: grow where you’re planted. We cannot simply demand that God give us an easier or better life, which is what Ephraim and Manasseh are trying to do here.

We ARE WHERE we ARE because of WHERE we ARE and God wants us to grow right where we’re planted.

All we want is for God to change things for us. And all God wants is to use where we are to change us. We want God to make things better. God wants to use things to make us better. We want God to change our circumstances. God wants to use our circumstances to change us.

Do you see the opposite perspectives? God says, “No. I am not going to give you an easy life. I am not going to change things for you. Where you’re at I want you because I’m

refining you, I'm pressing you, I'm molding and shaping you, I'm taking the dross off, I'm turning you more into Jesus."

From glory to glory and to the image of Christ we are transformed. God uses where you're planted to do that. Stop kicking against it and start growing there so that you can begin to take possession of the Promised Life right where you're at.

So in verse 14 these tribes say, "This lot isn't good enough for us." Then in Joshua 17:15 we read,

Joshua 17:15 (NLT)

15 Joshua replied, "If there are so many of you, (NKJ - if you are a 'great' people) and if the hill country of Ephraim is not large enough for you, clear out land for yourselves in the forest where the Perizzites and Rephaites live."

Joshua is not giving in to their "entitled view" of themselves and he's not giving them additional land. He is simply pointing them to the land that God had already given them.

Joshua is saying, "Look, God has already given you everything you need. You're just not possessing what God has made available to you." Instead you're just sitting on your... inheritance whining and complaining and demanding that God give you a better and easier life.

God has already given us everything we need to begin taking possession of the Promised Life right where we are at. We've just got to be less committed to demanding that God fix everything for us and more committed to seeking God with everything we have to take full possession of all he has for us right where we're planted. Right in the situation we are at, right in the circumstance we are at. We don't say, "God fix it, fix it, fix it!" We say, "Jesus I need more of you, and more of you and more of you. I need to grow in my genuine relationship with you. I need to grow in my ability to put my faith into action, and I need to grow in my obedience to drive out the enemy right where I am."

So Joshua says (verse 15), ***"God has already given you all that you need. You just need to clear out land for yourselves in the forest where the Perizzites and Rephaites live."***

But the forest land is difficult and that's going to take some hard work, plus the Perizzites and Rephaites – those are enemies that we're going to have to conquer. And we thought we were special, we thought we were entitled to God making everything easy for us.

Guys, God want you to take possession of all the Promised Life he has for you, but it begins by you growing right where you're planted, not asking God to change where

you're planted because first he wants to do something in you right in the midst of that circumstance you find yourself in. You have to get up early to meet Jesus. You have to choose Jesus over what your flesh is crying out for. You have to say no to the world to be able to yes to Jesus. It is difficult but God wants you to possess it. He wants you to clear the forest and drive the enemy out.

So Joshua tells these whining tribes to get busy and take full possession of what God has already given them.

And so they complain some more.

Joshua 17:16 (NLT)

16 The descendants of Joseph responded, "It's true that the hill country is not large enough for us. But all the Canaanites in the lowlands have iron chariots, both those in Beth-shan and its surrounding settlements and those in the valley of Jezreel. They are too strong for us."

"Goooddd, what you've given me is NOT big enough. Plus - - It's kinda HARD"

"On one side we have to climb the mountain and on the other side we have enemies in the Valley . . ."

"Goooddd, this is NOT the life I expected . . ."

Guys, we don't need a greener lot from God. We need to begin taking possession of the Promised Life right where we're at and if we will grow in Christ in the midst of this "lot".

Then and usually only then will God move us further into the Promised Life he has for us. If you will say, "Lord allow me to possess all that you've already given me – right here." Then God will expand your capacity for himself and expand the territory of your Promised Life.

We begin to do this by:

Growing in our *Genuine Relationship* with the Lord (foundation)

Growing in our *Faith in Action*

Growing in our *Obedience* to drive out the enemy.

So these tribes come to complain (verse 14) that God isn't giving them enough or making it easy enough. Joshua tells them that God has already given them all they need (verse 15) so they repeat their complaint to God (verse 16). So Joshua repeats God's answer in verses 17-18.

Joshua 17:17–18(a) (NLT)

***17 Then Joshua said to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph, “Since you are so large and strong, you will be given more than one portion.
18 The forests of the hill country will be yours as well . . .***

Wait a minute, Joshua had already given them the “forests of the hill country” when he first gave them their “lot” in Chapter 16 and he had already told them (in verse 15) if they didn’t like the rest of their land to go up into the forest and clear that land. So, it seems like he is telling them the same thing again, doesn’t it? (He is.)

Again, Joshua 17:18,

Joshua 17:18 (NLT)

18 The forests of the hill country will be yours as well. (in other words: God’s NOT changing his mind, So) Clear as much of the land as you wish, and take possession of its farthest corners. And you will drive out the Canaanites from the valleys, too, even though they are strong and have iron chariots.

This is it. This is the entire lesson. Joshua says to the whining tribes, you are at where you are at... so get to work and take possession of all that God has given you right where you’re at. Lay the axe to the forest! Take possession of its farthest corners! And drive out the enemy, even though they are strong and have iron chariots.

Do you see it?

Joshua is telling them – grow where you are planted. Take possession of all that God has for you – right there and drive out the enemy. They can complain all they want, but nothing is going to change until they begin to take possession of the Promised Life right where they’re at.

And how do we begin to do that?

We begin to do this by:

Growing in our *Genuine Relationship* with the Lord (foundation)

Growing in our *Faith in Action*

Growing in our *Obedience* to drive out the enemy.

That’s how you begin to grow where you’re planted.

Buuutttt – there’s just one more thing...

Remember that command at the end of verse 17? *And you will drive out the Canaanites from the valleys, too, even though they are strong and have iron chariots.*

Well, back in Chapter 16 was the summary of the land given to Ephraim.

Joshua 16:10 says,

Joshua 16:10 (NLT)

10 They did not drive the Canaanites out of Gezer, however, so the people of Gezer live as slaves among the people of Ephraim to this day.

And then, right before our text today in Chapter 17 is the summary of the land given to Manasseh. We read in Joshua 17:12-13,

Joshua 17:12–13 (NLT)

12 But the descendants of Manasseh were unable to occupy these towns because the Canaanites were determined to stay in that region.

13 Later, 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.

These discontent tribes never did drive the enemy out. When they became “strong enough” they decided to “keep the enemy under control” instead of driving them out as God had commanded.

And as the Book of Judges opens (very next book), in Judges 2:12 we read the very next generation after Joshua’s generation abandoned the Lord and they followed after the god of the Canaanites who they refused to drive out of their lives. They thought they could keep the enemy under control, but the enemy ended up controlling them. When God says drive the enemy out, he means *drive the enemy out* NOT fool yourself into thinking you have the enemy under control.

As we grow where we’re planted

In our *Genuine Relationship* with Jesus Christ

In our *Faith in Action*

In our *Obedience* to drive out the enemy

I promise you we will begin to possess more and more of the Promised Life God has for us.

Grow (in Christ) right where you’re planted.

Let’s pray. *Lord Jesus, sear that into our hearts. It’s not our circumstances that are important; it’s our relationship with you. It’s not our trials, it’s are we putting our faith*

into action that's important. It's not the ease of our life, Lord; it's our obedience to drive the enemy out. Re-frame our perspective. Show us the beginning of not only growing where we're planted, but taking possession of the Promised Life. And fill us to overflowing with your life, with your faith, with obedience to you and with power to be transformed. For your glory, for your sake and in your name, Jesus, amen.