

JOSHUA 17-19

Excuses, Excuses

Joshua 17:14-18

Joshua 18:1-10

Excuses

Webster

- a. A reason that you give to explain a mistake or your bad behavior
- b. Reasons that you give to explain why you cannot do something,
- c. Something that explains improper behavior and in an attempt to make it acceptable

He's always making excuses for himself.

Excuses are used to attempt to justify why we are OR are not doing something

Ben Franklin

He who is good at making excuses is rarely good for anything else

We find examples of excuses scattered through the scriptures

- o When Jesus called men to follow Him, some came up with excuses

Luke 9:61-62

And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."

But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

What a contrast between his man and Elisha

1 Kings 19:19-21

So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you."

And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?"

So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

Elisha kissed his family goodbye, used his farming equipment to make an offering to the Lord, provided food for nepeople and followed Elijah into ministry

○ Others made excuses why they could not serve Christ

Moses used his limited speaking abilities as an excuse

Ex 4:10

*Then Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not **eloquent**, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I **am slow of speech** and slow of tongue."*

Saul used his humble beginnings

1Sam 9:21

*And Saul answered and said, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the **smallest** of the tribes of Israel, and my family the **least** of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?"*

Jeremiah used his youth and inexperience

Jer 1:6

Then said I:

"Ah, Lord God!

*Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a **youth.***"

- But in each case God would have nothing to do with their excuses

He told Moses and Jeremiah that He made their mouths and would use them as He saw fit

The principle is that our limitations do not limit God.

In many ways our limitation, weaknesses or inability actually enhance the word of God

2Cor 12:10

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

1Cor 1:29

God has chosen the weak things of the world... That no flesh may glory in His presence

- Others made excuses why they could not accomplish a certain task

The **spies** excused themselves based upon the size of the Canaanites and the security of their cities

Saul cowered in his tent at the sight of Goliath

The **11** remained on the deck of the boat while Peter stepped courageously into the water

- Others however chose to look to God and trust Him over the challenge they were facing

- Isaiah 37 records how Hezekiah heard the words of the Assyrian king and chose to look to the Lord instead. As a result he was rewarded for his faith and able to accomplish what no one else was able to do. Judah defeated the Assyrian army

His accomplishment gave him notoriety and opportunity to declare the name of God before kings and nations (an opportunity he sadly missed)

- The disciples were threatened and warned not to speak about Christ, they chose to look to God and trust Him. The result was they filled Jerusalem with their doctrine and changed the world
 - Moses chose to put his staff in the sea
 - David picked up the 5 smooth stones
 - Peter stepped out of the boat
 - Paul made his way toward Jerusalem
 - Timothy joined the ministry team
 - Matthew walked away from his tax office
 - Gideon marched on the Midianites with his torch, pot and trumpet
 - Caleb took the mountain
- And history is filled with stories of Caleb like faith

Jim Elliot left all to take the Gospel to Ecuador. He famously wrote in his journal

"No man is a fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Hudson Taylor took the Gospel into inland China. He established a network that reached the lost and established churches among the native Chinese.

CT Studd gave up a life of a sports hero to bring the gospel to Africa. When a large inheritance was provided for him, he gave it all to missions work

How about the young men and women from Calvary who have stepped out on mission trips in Central America, Brazil, Africa, England, New Zealand and right here in our own community

In all these cases, **Excuses** would not keep these men and women from accomplishing what God had placed before them

Tom Brokaw wrote a book called the greatest generation. In it he describes the collective mindset of those born in the 20's and 30's. He describes how what looked to

be the most promising time in American history became a period of our greatest challenges.

The stock market crash of the 20's led to the Great Depression sending four and a half million people onto the streets with no safety net. And the average American farm family had an annual cash income of four hundred dollars.

If that were not enough world war broke out and this same generation went voluntarily to the battle field not to protect themselves or to advance American land but out of the need to protect others and stop villainy

Brokaw writes

"The young Americans of this time constituted a generation birth-marked for greatness, a generation of Americans that would take its place in American history with the generations that had converted the North American wilderness into the United States and infused the new nation with self-determination embodied first in the Declaration of Independence and then in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights."

Today, however we seem to be infected by a disease often called entitlement, where people expect things to be done for them.

Webster defines it this way

- Belief that one is deserving of or entitled to certain privileges

This thinking has made its way inside the church.

We forget that we are a functioning part of the body, not a parasite that attaches itself to the body

Like a barnacle on a whale, some people look for a free ride

We find many expecting ministry to be done for them rather than facing challenges and seeking to impact the world for the kingdom of God

In our text we will read of the tribes of Joseph; both Ephraim and Manasseh and see how this entitlement attitude had infected them as was keeping them from accomplishing what God had called them to

Back in Joshua 13 we read that much land remained to be possessed. Here we find out why Ephraim and Manasseh had failed to take what was allotted to them.

These two tribes are depicted as being dissatisfied with their allotted territory, challenging Joshua, and being challenged by him in return.

Joshua 17:14-18

Then the **children of Joseph** spoke to Joshua, saying, "**Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people, inasmuch as the Lord has blessed us until now?**"

So Joshua answered them, "If you are a great people, **then go up to the forest country** and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you."

But the children of Joseph said, "**The mountain country is not enough** for us; and all the **Canaanites** who dwell in the land of the valley have **chariots of iron**, both those who are of Beth Shean and its towns and those who are of the Valley of Jezreel."

And **Joshua spoke** to the house of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—saying, "You are a great people and have great power; you shall not have only one lot, but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it is wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong."

The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh felt that they had been shortchanged so they came to Joshua and said

"Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people"

- They felt as though they were entitled to more than they were given.
- They wanted Joshua to give them another portion of land

One man said,

The Ephraimites and Manassites blame Joshua when they ought to be blaming themselves. They excuse themselves from a task which they are too idle to execute, and wish Joshua to make arrangements for them which are wholly unnecessary

Joshua responds

"If you are a great people, then go up to the forest country and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you."

In other words he pointed them to **all** the land within their territory that they had **failed** to take. There was hill country and plains still occupied by the Canaanites that they needed to conquer

It is here that their excuses came out

*"The **mountain country is not enough** for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have **chariots of iron**, both those who are of Beth Shean and its towns and those who are of the Valley of Jezreel."*

- The hill country is too small
- The plains are filled with armies with chariots

These conditions were real.

The hill country was wooded and would require a great deal of effort to inhabit.

Areas would need to be cleared, towns established and built, and planting crops is more difficult in the hills than the valleys

In addition the Jezreel valley was filled with well-endowed armies fit with chariots and this area was inhabited by the Rephadites

The Rephaites were associated primarily with Bashan, east of the Jordan and they were considered to be fearsome giants

Deuteronomy 3:11

*For only Og the king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the **Rephaim**. Behold, his bed was a bed of iron. Is it not in Rabbah of the Ammonites? Nine cubits was its length, and four cubits its breadth, according to the common cubit.*

Joshua 12:4

*Og king of Bashan, one of the remnant of the **Rephaim**, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei*

Joshua 13:12

*The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the **Anakim**. Like the Anakim they are also counted as **Rephaim**, but the Moabites call them Emim.*

Joshua's response is noteworthy

Joshua 17:17-18

And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—saying, “You are a great people and have great power; you shall not have only one lot, but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it is wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong.”

After rebuking them Joshua's approach is to encourage them in their call.

- You are great
- You shall take the mountains
- You shall drive out the Canaanites

Pulpit commentary

Thou shalt drive out.

It is in thy power. Though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong. “No weapon can prosper” against him who trusts in the Lord

Joshua goes beyond encouraging them, he joins them

Joshua 19:49-51

Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim chooses his inheritance in the hill country. The very area they thought was too difficult to take, Joshua participated in taking.

How do we help the discouraged?

Share the promises of Scripture with them

Join along in the task

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

JOSHUA 18

Still addressing the subject of the distribution of the land, we find Israel congregating together in Shiloh.

It seems the headquarters of the nation has moved from Gilgal, more of a military command center, to Shiloh.

This will become the center for Israeli government and worship. In Shiloh the tabernacle was erected. It would be to Shiloh that the people would gather three times annually for the pilgrim feasts.

Shiloh will remain the spiritual center of the nation until the time of David. He will move the ark to Jerusalem and prepare for the building of the temple.

As the congregation gathers, for worship they also receive a rebuke.

Joshua 18:3

Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: "How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?"

7 of the 9 tribes in Canaan had yet to possess their inheritance. They seemed to be remaining within the inheritance of other tribes

Joshua attributes their failure to neglect

Joshua 18:3

*Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: "How long will you **neglect** to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?"*

Neglect -

- to give little attention or respect to : disregard
- to leave undone or unattended to especially through carelessness

The park was overgrown and littered from years of neglect

7 tribes gave little attention to that which should have warranted their greatest attention

Many give little thought to relationship with God and in doing so they neglect that which matters most

Like the rich fool. All attention is given to material things

- Family
- Funds
- Fun

Receive the attention that should be given to faith

Scripture gives us insight into why they neglected to take the land

This word translated "neglect" is used in a few other places

Prov 18:9

*He who is **slothful** in his work*

Is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.

Prov 24:10

*If you **faint** in the day of adversity,*

Your strength is small.

2Sam 4:1

*When Saul's son heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he **lost heart**, and all Israel was troubled.*

Ezra 4:4

*Then the people of the land tried to **discourage** the people of Judah. They troubled them in building,*

We have the same problem (Neglect)

With a variety of different causes

Think of a home that has been neglected. It might be because it has been abandoned, someone is ill, the family had a tragedy that has occupied their time and attention or the people living there simply don't care

Same problem, different causes

Paul addressed this in the church

1Thes 5:14

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

An unruly person, a faint hearted person and a weak person might all act out in the same way. But the cause is quite different.

It is important to understand why we are or are not doing something so we can address the problem.

If discouragement is cause - encouragement is the solution

If sloth is the cause - diligence is the solution

If weakness is the cause - strength is the solution

Conclusion

Much work remains to be done

Children's classes need godly teachers

Home fellowships need leaders

Missionaries need support

Churches need to be started

Worship leaders need to be raised up

Outreaches need to be established

Now is not the time for us to expect others to do the work or to neglect that which God has called us to do.