

Sermon preached by Rev. R. Van Overloop entitled "Calling Toward Canaanites"
[There is no title or points given in sermon]

We read the word of God as we find it in Joshua 13. The text is the first six verses:

1. Now Joshua was old and stricken in years, and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.
2. This is the land that yet remaineth: all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri,
3. From Sihor, which is before Egypt even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazathites, and the Ashdothites, the Eshkalonites, and Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites:
4. From the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that is beside the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites:
5. And the land of the Biglites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrising, from Baalgad under mount Hermon unto the entering unto Hamath.
6. All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephothmaim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.

[In these verses] we learn that while God through the seven-year campaign had given to the children of Israel the northern part of the land of Canaan, the victories that they had earlier had given to them the southern part of the land of Canaan, that now all of this was in their control. However, there were pockets, there were areas, there were cities, and especially in the very southwestern part of the land of Canaan, where the Philistines lived, they had not yet taken care of them. Those Canaanites were still alive and well.

But the primary part of this chapter indicates that God had given to Joshua the responsibility of distributing by lot the inheritance of the land. The next few chapters describe each tribe. So chapter 15 gives the tribe of Judah and especially Caleb and Othniel their land; chapter 16, what was given to Joseph and the sons of Joseph; chapter 17, Manasseh; and so on. You see how it is divided by lot under the control of Joshua.

The primary focus that we want to take before us this evening is the responsibilities, the calling, that God gave to Joshua and the children of Israel, really the children of Israel not just Joshua, towards those remaining Canaanites. Some of you may remember that when Stephan Regnerus was interning here one of the sermons he preached here and throughout the churches was that God would have the children of Israel gain the land of Canaan step by step, portion by portion. One of the reasons is that so that the children of Israel, though they were very large, still did not fill the land of Canaan and if they had destroyed every being human being throughout the land of Canaan, there would have been all kinds of areas which would have grown wild, and wild animals would have prospered there. So God did it in his wisdom step by step.

But at the same time, there remained the responsibility of the next generations of how to deal with those that God said were worthy of eternal judgment. We've seen that. The

children of Israel come into the land of Canaan, they are God's hand such as much as the fire and brimstone were to Sodom and Gomorrah, the flood in the days of Noah, to execute judgment and to bring hell in time, rightly on time. We would say prior to the final judgment. But God would bring hell and judgment to those nations because they had filled the cup of iniquity.

The chapter begins with a reference to Joshua's age. Most commentators say that Joshua at this time is approximately eighty-five years old. He didn't have what God gave to Moses miraculously. Moses, though one hundred twenty, never lost strength. God sustained him for all his duties and responsibilities. But Joshua was more like all of us. So when he hits approximately eighty-five years old, his responsibilities changed. He is not relieved of responsibilities, but his responsibilities change. His calling to serve God continues even in his advanced age. God will not leave him *free* of the responsibilities to serve God, but now in a different way.

What this does indicate is this: God knows our abilities. He knows our strengths and knows when those strengths falter and fail. God is very mindful of his children. So he's old and stricken in years. God says to him, "You're old and stricken in years." God is saying to him, "I know Joshua. I know that you can't do what you used to be able to do." God shows his care, God shows his sensitivity, God shows that he knows.

At the same time, that is a time of humbling. When we get older and we are not as able to do the things that we once could, then we realize that—well in this case particularly, Joshua is a type of Christ—shows that all of the types have limitations. They cannot do what the Lord Jesus Christ can do. Joshua, whose name is Jesus in the Greek, is only a type, and as a type he is going to have limitations and failures.

Thirdly, as already noted, the task may change but the task is still there. Now he learns to pray. He doesn't go out in the battles anymore. But now his task is to sit as it were at a table or at a desk, and he's going to look at the whole of geography of the land of Canaan and cast lots, and by the casting of lots to determine which portion of the land of Canaan will be given to each tribe. He is very fit for this. Who else among the children of Israel, would all the different tribes agree to accept his conclusions?

One commentator worded it this way, or expressed it this way: It was at Joshua's word that the sun and the moon stood still. So when he gave the word about where the inheritance would be of each tribe, it would be only the immature, foolish ones who would dare to disagree. If he could make by his word the sun stand still when he said, "This is your inheritance," they would accept it.

Joshua must do that soon. When God says, "There is yet very much to be possessed, but now still distribute the land," the responsibility is going to not fall on the nation, all of the tribes together. The two and half tribes are going to be able to go back to their families on the east side of the Jordan River. But now, each one in their location will be able to keep their attitude of war and of fighting going, but now in their own areas. Under Joshua's leadership they have substantially gained the whole of the land. But the text shows, especially in that first verse, that there's still pockets—there's still much that has to be done.

And so continuing to grasp a hold of God's promises, they have, what we would say everything in chapter 12—the list of the thirty-one kings that they have conquered. That past experience shows them God will be with them, and they can do it. So now they go out

individually, and they take on that responsibility of destroying the enemies that are there amongst them.

God identifies three reasons, three reasons, why God wants them to see this is your lot, this is your inheritance. Now there are enemies still there. Go forth.

He wants to stir them up. They may have had a seven-year campaign of war. They like us would say, "Okay, that's enough." God wants them to realize they still had to continue their efforts to fight and to destroy those who are worthy of eternal judgment. Just as these thirty-one kings were worthy of judgment, so now, too, those remaining are worthy of *divine* judgment. God himself identified them as worthy of judgment. So they are to continue in the posture of war and of battle. Don't set your weapons aside; don't relax and say, "Well, okay, now it's time for me to build my houses." All their houses were already built. They just moved in and occupied cities and houses that were already there. Now they were not to rest. They were to continue to fight.

Also by identifying the pockets of enemies that were there, God was stirring them up to a godly jealousy. He wanted them to be jealous of those people who were occupying their rightful inheritance. Destroy them; spread your wings; be fruitful and multiply; fill that part of your inheritance. But remove them so that you can spread forth in that part of your inheritance.

Thirdly, God always wants us to realize how grateful we ought to be, how the Heidelberg Catechism in its three parts, third part gratitude. And it's gratitude that motivates God's people onto obedience. Gratitude motivates us unto obedience.

Turn that around. When there is a responsibility—a parent gives a child responsibility: clean your room, help with the dishes, do this, do that—there is a commandment. But the parent who wants to guide that child to fulfill that responsibility does it best by showing to that child how grateful they should be. Now sometimes we don't quite communicate that as we ought as parents. To tell the child and identify for them how many diapers they've changed, how much food they've given, how much they have watched over and secured them from infancy on. And from a young person's perspective: how inappropriate cockiness or the quickness with which we would say no. If we're grateful, not just to parents but to God for the parents, so that instead seeing the necessity of only looking at the parents, just as we talked about sufferings—it can come through humans, through foes—but God says, "Look at me. I am sending it in love." So instead of just looking at the parents, which may want us to do something that we don't want to do, look up and see a God who is giving us that responsibility, a responsibility that is under the umbrella of the fifth commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

Always, every responsibility is more easily fulfilled and commandments obeyed when we see how grateful we are and ought to be for what our God has given to us.

And so here, they come in to a land. They have been delivered out of the bondage of sin, slavery. They were kept for forty years in the wilderness; they were enabled to pass through miraculously the Jordan River. Every enemy that they faced they've conquered miraculously, sometimes with miracles, sun standing still, hornets, hailstones. Sometimes just doing battle, just fighting, fulfilling the responsibility. And God kept them. The only time that we read that any Israelite was killed were those who were killed by the men of Ai, and when Israel ran away from them, and then thirty-six. Now let's not minimize the deaths, but at the

same time only thirty-six. Gratitude, showing to us, reminding us, what we owe our God for what he has gifted to us. So again, they come into a land. They don't have to plant a vineyard; they don't have to plant an orchard and wait for the trees to grow up; they don't have to build the houses, they're all there; they don't have to furnish the houses, all the furnishings are there; the barns are full. They walk in, and they owe God gratitude. Now that's just the material things.

Then this: what differed Israel from those Canaanites? In Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 7 rather, God tells them not one thing. You are a holy people *because* God has chosen you. And he chose you and made you a special people above all the people that are on the face of the earth, but God did not set his love upon you because you're better or because you're more in number. You are the fewest. But because God loved you. In chapter 9, listen to this out of Deuteronomy 9: bear with me, but let's hear the word of God:

1. Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven,
2. A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak!
3. Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.
4. Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.
5. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, does thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
6. Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.
7. Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD.
8. Also in Horeb [Mount Sinai] ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you.
13. Furthermore, the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.

Gratitude?

What do I deserve?

What do you deserve?

What do we deserve from him?

By ourselves, the same judgment that they were executing on the land of Canaan and all the inhabitants.

So us.

God calls them through Joshua to continue to fight and to drive out their enemies because they're the enemies of God. They are to focus on the fact that they have God's promise, just as we read here from Deuteronomy 9. God gave this as a gift way back in Genesis 12: "Abraham passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land." That is all he said: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." And God gave that promise. It's a divine gift to them, and it's a picture of the heavenly Canaan. It's a divine gift—never earned. God fought for them; the victories were his, victories of his grace. And that's why this passage from Deuteronomy 9 is so important to read.

But now, God's gift, a divine gift, does not make Israel or us passive recipients. We're receiving the fulfillments of God's promises, but his promises and gifts to us don't make us passive. Our activity that God commands us to perform also...

Turn it around: our activity does not deny God's gifts.

God's sovereignty, man's responsibility.

God's gifts don't deny responsibilities.

The fulfillment of our responsibilities, by the grace of God, doesn't deny the gift.

I read from Deuteronomy 9. Now listen to the word of God in Deuteronomy 10, Moses still speaking:

12. And now Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee [require, command], but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,
13. To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?
14. Behold [here is God's sovereignty], the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.
15. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.
16. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked [stiffnecked, stubborn, I want to do my thing my way. Circumcise the foreskin of your heart].

Here's your duty, here's your calling, again summarized in verse 12 of Deuteronomy 10: Fear him, walk in all his ways, love him, serve him with all of your heart and soul, keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes, which I you command you this day. "For the LORD your God of Gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment" [vv. 17-18].

God's sovereignty, man's responsibility.

God's gifts and Christ's merits does not exclude God's use of means.

Does not exclude God's gift of the use of the means of our obedience.

One more time: God's gifts and Christ's merits does not exclude God's sovereign use of the means of our obedience.

So as the inspired word in Hebrews 4:11 says, "Labour...to enter into the rest, lest [ye] fall...[in] unbelief." *Labor* to enter into the rest, lest ye fall in unbelief, Hebrews 4 verse 11. And that labor is what we identified in Deuteronomy 10:12: keep his commandments.

God's sovereignty never removes responsibility because responsibility is determined by God's commandments. What doth God require of thee? Circumcise the foreskin of your heart. And that beloved, is not something you do once and you got-r-done. A physical foreskin being cut off in circumcision—once, it's finished. The calling to circumcise the foreskin of our hearts never stops. How many times every day?

And twice it's noted: here's the lots; here's are the tribes; here's the land. But not Levi—not Levi. Remember Levi, Genesis 32, 33? Levi and his brother went in, and thought they were going to rectify the matter of their sister Dinah, who was maybe raped by Shechem. So they were going to take care of every male in the city of Shechem. And they did. If it wasn't for God's protecting them, Jacob and his household, the citizens in that area would have come on Jacob and his family and destroyed them. So God said, "Levi, you will not have an inheritance with your brethren."

But then when Moses came down from the mount, and they were all dancing naked before the golden calf, then Moses issued this command: "Who is on the Lord's side?" And the Levite, Moses, the brothers of Moses—the tribe of Levi—came forward. And they were given the right to execute divine judgment on everyone who, in spite of all the things that had already happened—he broke the tables of stone, he threw them in the water and made them drink—those who were still dancing naked had divine judgment brought upon them by Levi. So while Levi never inherited land (forty-eight cities were given to them but no land), they were chosen for this position of doing the sacrifices of Jehovah.

Today, you and I stand spiritually before a God who has graciously and mercifully chosen us among all the others that he has chosen—not just us—but a remnant, a remnant, according to the election of grace. Of ourselves, that old man (Romans 7) is still so powerful and so ever-present. That's why we need to circumcise the foreskin of our hearts continuously. Nothing good can we produce. What we do that is recognized by God as good is what he has given us to be able to do.

We don't cooperate in our election; we don't cooperate in our redemption; we don't cooperate in our justification.

But that does not mean that as regenerated and justified people we are to be passive. The Christian, as a rational, moral creature, receives commands and responsibilities. He reasons with us; he sets before us right and wrong; and he calls upon us to do that which is right. He gives us the command to fight the good fight of faith; he commands us to use the means of grace; he commands us to resist the devil; he commands us to draw nigh to him; he commands us to adhere to his scriptures, to his word—to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. And it is precisely grace which gives us a correct outlook and say, "God is working in me, in all of us, so that we *want* to do the right and not the wrong." And so when we are enabled to do the right instead of the wrong, we look back and say, "It was through Christ, who strengthened me. Not me. It was through Christ."

And yet God commanded; I performed a duty.

Two rails. They go side by side.

In the wisdom of God—his sovereignty, our responsibility.

And it's all grace, and *nothing* but grace.

And there's where our gratitude grows and our desire to be obedient onto his commandments arises—the way God works.

It is very interesting that in the middle of this distribution of the land by lot, that we have another reference, and that reference is to “Balaam...the son of Beor, the soothsayer” [v. 22].

In second Peter chapter 2 we learn that it was because of his thirst for the wages of unrighteousness, the wages (that's how it is worded: the wages of unrighteousness). Balaam was looking for earthly fame and earthly riches. And for what Balak, the king of Moab, promised to give to him, he was willing to disobey God and curse Israel. God, in spite of him, used him to bless Israel. But he is the one who devised the plan to bring ruin because he went to Balak. And when he could not curse them, after three attempts, then he gave the advice to Balak: “Send in your beauties, and send in your handsome young men, and get them to mingle and draw them, then, to the sacrifices of our gods, and that'll get them. That's the way God—they will make themselves curseable.” And if it wasn't for the activity of Phineas, the plague stopped.

But we're noted here, just as we see in Numbers 22 and again in Number 31, Balak [*sic*] died. He apparently never went back to his home; he stayed among the Moabites, and God gives us this record, again. Because there is in our natures the lust for the things of this earth, for fame, or to be known and recognized, even among the church people—we like to get recognized for what we do—God makes us aware by noting this especially: the folly, the double-mindedness that is ours when we want to be appreciated and recognized. God's divine testimony of that double-hearted man is that he perished with the wicked.

We cannot serve God and mammon.

Amen.