



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Joshua 15: 1-63

Winter 2021

"The Protracted Conflict"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. It's good to see all of you here. Our text is Joshua chapter 15 and as you can see it's a long text, 63 verses. But a lot of this, if you've read it, has to do with geography and cities. It's about Judah and its territory. The land at this point in the book is being apportioned out to the tribes. Their inheritance is being given to them and Judah is the first to receive it. And so, in the first 12 verses you have the geography of the land of the borders of Judah. And then, from verses 21 through verse 62, are a list of the cities that are there. I don't know that we need to read through all of that.

What I'm going to do is look at the passage that I think is really the heart of what we want to study this morning—and that's verses 13 through 19. It continues the story of Caleb that we began last week in chapter 14. So we're going to look at verses 13 through 19. I'll make reference to the other portions of the chapter in the lesson itself but now beginning with verse 13,

¹³ Now he gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh a portion among the sons of Judah, according to the command of the LORD to Joshua, *namely* Kiriath-arba, *Arba being* the father of Anak (that is, Hebron). ¹⁴ Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak. ¹⁵ Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-

sepher. ¹⁶ And Caleb said, "The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife." ¹⁷ Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife. ¹⁸ It came about that when she came *to him*, she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she alighted from the donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?" ¹⁹ Then she said, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

Joshua 15:13-19

Now as I thought about this passage and prepared it, I thought if I were to write a sentence that summarizes it, it would be something like, 'Living under the governance of the sovereign God as He moves the ages to their appointed end in the kingdom of God.' I think that's really the lesson that we should take out of this. And hopefully that is what we will understand it to be, and it will have application to us. Well let's now bow in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for this time together. It's a great privilege to be with Your people. It's a necessary thing for us to do, to gather with the saints, as we're doing this morning. And to worship and then to study together Your word, to be nourished in it, and I pray that You would bless us as we do that. And I think as we study this text, we will see the greater lesson that we get from these events that took place in Canaan so long ago, is that You are in control of all things—You're sovereign. And yet we are living in the midst of this world that is in conflict with You and with us, and yet we are to live a certain way. But the glory is before us. The goal of history is found in Your promise, and it's the promise of the kingdom to come—and the world without end. And so we're to be living diligently for You now and looking forward to that great hope. And so LORD, encourage us with that as we study these verses together. Build us up in the faith.

And LORD, we pray that You'd provide for us materially. And we have many needs. We have needs every day and they vary from person to person. But in this particular

time of this pandemic and the challenge that it presents to some people in particular with difficulties, we pray for them. We pray that You would protect them and keep them safe. Protect us all, for that matter.

We thank You that we're coming together like we are, and we pray that some day soon we'll be able to resume a completely normal schedule. But we pray that You'd bless our time now and prepare our hearts for this time of study with our next hymn. And then, may the Spirit of God guide us in our understanding and the application of this passage to us. We look to You to bless, and we pray these things in the Savior's name. Amen.

History has wars with some ominous names, like 'The Hundred Years War', which was fought between England and France in the Middle Ages. Then there's 'The Thirty Years War', a war of religion that was fought up and down Germany for a generation—with consequences that lasted for centuries. Those, and other wars like them, are called 'protracted conflicts', 'prolonged conflicts'. The term can also be applied to battles, like the Battle of the Bulge in WWII, that lasted for five weeks in winter.

One of the greatest battles in the Bible and in history is Gideon's fight with the Midianites, when 300 men of Israel defeated an army of 135,000. It's found in Judges, chapters 7 and 8, —they attacked at night with trumpets and torches. The Midianites were caught by surprise and in their confusion fought against themselves; and then fled across the Jordan river. Gideon gave chase. His 300 are described as 'weary yet pursuing'. And that went on for days. That can be exhausting. It was for the 300, but they didn't stop. They didn't declare victory and go home. They pursued until they completed the mission and ended the scourge of the Midianites.

Now there's a lesson in that for us. We are in a spiritual war that is continual. It is a protracted conflict. It is long. It never ends this side of heaven. —And we get weary. But we can't let up—Ever! We can't stop pursuing. The Scot, Andrew Bonar, gave good spiritual counsel when he wrote, "Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle." It's advice Israel needed in its war on the Canaanites. It was a successful war. It

lasted seven years, and by the time Joshua divided up Canaan among the tribes, they were war weary. They were ready to receive their inheritance. That's what these last chapters, chapters 14 through 19, are about—dividing up the land for the tribes for their inheritance. It was time to do that, to settle in, to work and worship.

And yet, all through these chapters we read statements like, "But they did not drive out the Canaanites." Or, "The Canaanites persisted in living in the land." That meant, while they were building their nation they had to be citizen soldiers. They had to be warriors as well as farmers and shepherds. And in our passage, Joshua 15, we get a model of that with Caleb, where his story concludes.

Chapter 14 began the story. He asked Joshua for the land that God had promised to him 45 years earlier. And now he takes possession of it. It's recorded in verses 13 through 19. It is kind of a spiritual nugget surrounded by some mundane details—geographical details in the first part of the chapter and then those of a number of cities that they had within their territory.

Caleb was of the tribe of Judah, and in chapter 15 the boundaries of Judah's territory are given. The chapter begins with, "Now the lot for the tribe of the sons of Judah..." Their territory was located in the southern part of Canaan, and its borders are described in first 12 verses. Generally we can say that the boundaries extended from east to west from the western shore of the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, and then north to south from the northern rim of the Dead Sea down to the river of Egypt, (which is not the Nile river, as we might think, but Wadi el-Arish. When you look on your maps you can see that it's sort of the eastern part of the Sinai desert.)

Judah is listed first, and it's given more space than any of the other tribes, with far more cities listed. Something like 122 cities are listed in verses 21 through 62. And all of that in order to reflect Judah's importance. It was the first of the tribes. The tribe of Israel's kings—even though Judah was not the first born—Reuben was. Judah was the fourth son of Jacob, after his older brother, Simeon, and Levi. But all three disqualified themselves from being the head of the family by sin. So it's the story of our spiritual

struggle—our spiritual battle. Reuben was disqualified because of immorality, Simeon and Levi because of anger and violence.

It's all recounted in Genesis 49, when Jacob blessed his sons before he died. In Genesis 49, verses 8 through 12, he blessed Judah. He said, "...Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies..." "...Judah is a lions whelp..." (vs8&9). Now those statements may refer to David, the warrior king. But then in verse 10, Jacob prophesied, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." The word 'Shiloh' is probably best understood as a combination of Hebrew words 'si' and 'loh'. Together they mean 'to whom it belongs', or 'to whose it is'.

Jacob's promise was that the scepter would not depart from Judah until the final owner of it, the final king of the tribe of Judah came—'the one whose it is'. And ultimately that is Christ, the Messiah, to whom the scepter belongs. He is 'the lion of the tribe of David'.

And the promise of the scepter and the coming king begins to take shape with the giving of land to Judah. This is the initial fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy, which will ultimately be fulfilled when Christ returns to reign.

But this and all the allotments to the tribes, which fulfill Jacob's blessings indicate something about history—that it has fulfillment, that it has a goal—history is not meaningless. And I think we have a type of that, an illustration of that, in the giving of the land, the inheritance that they received.

Now I say history has a goal—it has a purpose—it's not meaningless. —That's unique to Christianity. That's unique to the Scriptures, to all of the Bible. The ancient world had no concept of 'History with Meaning'. The Greeks had their historians but they didn't see history as moving in a linear direction; as moving toward a goal with a purpose. It was just events repeating themselves in an endless cycle. It's the same with modern materialism. There is no meaning to things. There's no meaning to life.

The Bible is clear. There is meaning. Time is moving toward an appointed goal, the world-wide kingdom of God. History has meaning, and that means our lives have

meaning. What we do now counts for eternity. And what is given in verses 13 through 19 sets an example of how we are to live in the present, with the conclusion of Caleb's story, and the conquest of Hebron and the surrounding cities.

Now he wasn't alone in what he did. Caleb conquered with the help of a warrior named Othniel. But first Caleb accomplished his first goal of taking Hebron and correcting the original sin of 45 years earlier and justifying God. Verses 13&14, "Now he gave to Caleb, the son of Jephunneh a portion among the sons of Judah, according to the command of the LORD to Joshua, *namely* Kiriath-arba, *Arba being* the father of Anak, (that is Hebron), Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak."

Numbers 13 gives us the account of the 12 spies going into Canaan and scouting out the land and this was where they searched. —And these three giants here were there then, (at least their names are mentioned in Numbers 13, verse 22). So they so terrified the nation that the nation lost faith in the LORD God. There are giants in the land, and they live in giant cities, 'so they lost confidence—they lost faith in the LORD. But Caleb never did. And he longed for the day when he could return, thrash the giants, and prove the LORD is almighty and He's more than good for His Word.

But there were other cities to conquer. We read in verse 15, "Then he went up from there against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher. And Caleb said, 'The one who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as a wife.' Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, captured it, so that he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife." (vs15-17).

Now Debir is a city that's mentioned back in chapter 10 as one of the cities that Joshua captured during the southern campaign. You remember, they begin conquering the land with Jericho, then Ai, and then the men of Gibeon asked for help. They've made this bargain with them, this covenant with them, by trickery and they go to defend that city against this southern army of Canaanites—and they defeat them. Then they move to the north and conduct a northern campaign against the northern part of Canaan. So, Hebron was captured then and Debir was captured then as well.

But now they're being recaptured. And so we have to ask ourselves what has happened here? And what this shows, I think, is the nature of the war that they, (and that we face), and why constant vigilance is necessary. Because when Joshua and the army of Israel marched off from the south to the north, the enemy reconstituted itself and moved back in. As Andrew Bonar warned, "Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle." We have an enemy that never sleeps and never accepts defeat. It's always looking for weakness.

So this was a recapture of those cities. And here, Caleb's example was copied by Othniel, showing the people, again, the path to success in war. And that path is faith in the LORD and courageous obedience. It took effort on their part. The promises of God must be appropriated, they must be believed and obeyed. This is our responsibility as the agents of the LORD. We must believe what He has promised and we must act upon it—and the LORD will always prove Himself to be faithful and bless the obedient.

Caleb believed that, and he gave incentive to fight by offering his daughter Achsah for a wife to the man who captured Kiriath-sepher. —And the meaning of that name, 'Kiriath' is village or city, and 'Sepher' is book. So this is 'city of the book', or 'city of books'. And that name might suggest that this was a city of learning. Perhaps this is where the University of Canaan was located. Perhaps it housed a great library. They kept all of the myths of Baal, and this was an important place for them in religion. Maybe it was a heavily fortified city. It certainly was an important city to them and considered a great prize since Caleb offered his daughter as a reward for valiant effort and success.

Fathers had complete authority over their daughters then. Saul, you remember perhaps, when he was facing this challenge of the giant in the valley of Elah, he made the same offer of his daughter in marriage to the man who killed Goliath. And I suppose, as we look at that, it might seem a bit unfair to Achsah, who had no say in the matter. But in this case, it guaranteed that her husband would be the best and the bravest of Judah's warriors. And more importantly it illustrates a truth that the LORD, our captain, offers rewards in the spiritual battle that we fight.

We find that throughout the Scriptures. We find it throughout the New Testament. For example, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, verses 10 through 15, when in the end our lives are judged, evaluated, sifted as it were through fire. The ones 'of value', which had been well built on the foundation of Christ, on service to Him, they will remain as gold, silver, and precious stones.

Now I want to qualify something in my statement, because when I say 'of value', God values every life of His church, His sheep, His people. He purchased them by the blood of His Son. And I don't want us to think that our value or our rewards are based simply on the things we do. Christianity is not just about doing. It's essentially about a relationship. And you'll remember, when the LORD speaks to the seven churches of Asia Minor, He has something to deal with some of them, most of them. And the first one is the church at Ephesus. And He says to them, He says, 'I know your deeds, I know your toil and your perseverance. Well, if He stopped right there and think, 'This is an active church, diligent in its service to the LORD! But then He says, "But I have *this* against you that You have left your first love." That's the essence of our Christian life. It is a relationship with the LORD Jesus Christ and through Him the Triune God. It is a relationship of love. And yes, we must be active. We must be bearing fruit. But it's the fruit we bear as a result of our love for Him and our devotion to Him. And that life has great rewards.

You see it in other places; James chapter 1 verse 12; 2 Timothy 4 verse 8. Paul knew he had a crown awaiting for him, as he was leaving this world. Which again is proof that what we do in the present counts for the future. The LORD rewards those who serve Him. And that should be incentive for labor.

So Othniel responded to this offer, this reward, to Caleb's challenge and emerged as a leader. He would become the first Judge of Israel after the death of Joshua. His career is recorded in Judges, chapters 1 and 3. He was a man much like Caleb. He was courageous and a leader who was willing and eager to attempt difficult and dangerous tasks for God. He was a man of faith.

It's often through a crisis that God raises up leaders in nations, in the church. They step forward, not without preparation. Maybe years of preparation have occurred, and then the moment comes. We prepare by being responsible in the moment, every day doing what we are supposed to be doing, being faithful—and in spiritual things, living obediently, knowing God, growing in that relationship, developing in wisdom.

We can assume that Othniel had preparation. David had preparation before fighting Goliath: he killed a bear, and a lion, while defending the flock. And Othniel certainly fought battles and had the example before him of Caleb, a great warrior. And they happened to be relatives. Othniel was his nephew. But Othniel not only received a bride through his valor, he also got a valuable wedding gift when Achsah asked for a blessing from her father. And in this we see a lot of Caleb in her. It's not completely clear, but it appears in verse 18 that she has to persuade Othniel to ask Caleb for this—for this gift or blessing.

But the word 'persuade' has a kind of negative nuance to it. It suggests to 'entice' or to 'urge', which suggests that the request, at least in the thought of Othniel, might not have been quite appropriate. It was a bold request and Othniel may not have been completely persuaded that he was the one that should ask because, we read on, in verse 18 she's the one who dismounts from her donkey and makes the request. It's a bold request she's going to make. But I think it's an example of what the expression is, 'the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree', for you see a lot of Caleb in her.

Achsah resembled her father in courage. Caleb did not hesitate to ask Joshua for his inheritance. And she was not shy about making her request of him. He asked what she wanted. And we read in verse 19, "Then she said, 'Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev, give me also springs of water.' So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs."

Now the Negev, I'm sure you know, is a semi-arid region. It's where the patriarchs lived. It's where we read of them in the Book of Genesis digging wells. Abraham did that. That's particularly characteristic of Isaac—digging wells and finding water. And the reason is because water is life and it's scarce in that region. So Achsah was greatly

grateful, I think, for the gift of land, the gift of the Negev. But she requested a field with springs of water because land without water is of very little value. It was within her father's power to give it, and so she asked for it, and she got it.

Now this story is simple and the story is direct—and it's an example of courage, as I've suggested. Caleb made his request of Joshua based on God's Word, the promise that God had given him, because he was a faithful spy. He was promised an inheritance in the land of Canaan, and he sought it and got it. And here Achsah makes her request of Caleb based on wisdom. She was bold. She did what she needed to do.

All three people in this passage give Israel a lesson on life. Be bold. Walk by faith. Live by revelation and wisdom. And specifically here, it's those who seek—that find. It's those who ask—that receive. She asked for something that was important; her request was not frivolous; it was necessary; it was good—and she received it. She asked for springs of water. She received the upper springs and the lower springs.

Now if Caleb would give what was best and necessary to his child, will not God give to Israel what is best when they sought it from Him—especially when they were obedient? Well of course He would. And He does that for us, too. Paul refers to the LORD at the end of Ephesians 3 as "...Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think..." (vs20). Mike (*Black*) quoted that verse in the Sunday School hour. That's how we live successfully in the world. —Walking with the LORD AND asking Him for blessing. When we ask according to His will, He gives. So all three were examples to Israel of how to receive blessings and how to carry on the fight against Canaanites—go at it with confidence and with faith.

David Livingston was one of the great missionaries of the 19th century and became one of the great heroes of the Victorian age. He was a man of great courage and selflessness; and he took the Gospel to Africa. He came to South Africa and went north. And he went into areas that had never been penetrated—really were fairly unknown. He went out into the bush. And as he came to these various tribes, (and Africans were very wary of the Europeans, and they had good reason to), but they met him, and he was

able to win a hearing with them and give the Gospel. And he kept pushing into new areas that had never been penetrated before.

And at one point, he's communicating with the mission station who are the ones that are telling him where he can and cannot go. And Livingston says to them, "I'll go anywhere, provided it be forward." That's how he lived his life. It's an exemplary life—and not a life that is characteristic of most people—but it's an exemplary life. And it's the kind of life that I think we see exhibited here in these men, Caleb and Othniel. And the daughter as well, Achsah, bold in their approach to life, and claiming the things of God in pursuing the things of God. Going forward, like Livingston did.

Now the remaining verses, verses 20 through 64, are a lengthy list of the cities within the boundary of Judah. And there are well over 100 listed here. (I think it's 122, but if you count them up you may find I'm off by a city or two.), It shows the scale of Judah's territory. It was large, and that indicates the importance that Judah had as a tribe. It also, and mainly this, showed the LORD's faithfulness. In Deuteronomy 6, He promised to give Israel, "...great and splendid cities, which they did not build, and houses full of all good things which they did not fill..." (vs10&11). They had those—He provided according to His promise.

But still, many of those cities were inhabited with Canaanites. Israel was not completely successful in driving them out. The chapter ends with a discouraging fact, an alarming fact—verse 63, "Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem until this day." Jerusalem is right on the border between Benjamin and Judah. And actually it belongs to the tribe of Benjamin, but Judah attacked. And according to Judges chapter 1 verse 8, they captured Jerusalem. But here they didn't.

There's no contradiction. It's what we saw earlier. What happened is, again, they had an initial victory over the Jebusites. But then the Jebusites regrouped and regained the city and became entrenched in it. Later, in Judges 1, verse 21, it states that Benjamin could not capture it either. Why is that? What happened? Was it because those

Jebusites were just too strong? Or the men of Judah and the men of Benjamin weren't strong enough? They didn't have the skill of Caleb and Othniel, or ... No, they ... Jebusites just had a better army.

Well, I think Calvin got it right. He said, "No. It's not that." And then he made a good point. "Had they exerted themselves to the full measure of their strength and failed of success, the dishonor would have fallen on God Himself. And that cannot be." No, the reason for their failure, for Judah's failure, then Benjamin's failure, was their failure, their weakness, their weariness. War gets old. In one of Spurgeon's sermons, he spoke of those 'who think they can do nothing'. He said, "Sometimes there is a want of way, because there is a want of will." Then he continues, "Though I do not go so far as to allege this is your case," speaking to his congregation, "we know too well that 'cannot' often does mean 'will not'. And 'not have triumphed' may mean that 'you have not tried.' "

I think that's true. It's true of us in our daily lives. Husbands and wives might say that 'they just can't get along', or 'they can't discipline their children', or 'we're too busy, we can't find time to study and pray'. The real problem is they can't do these things because they won't do them. I don't want to simplify some complicated issues, (and some, they are very difficult). But the reality is, if it's God's will, then we need to do it. And the problem is with us, not with Him.

Paul put the answer to the problem in Philippians chapter 4 verse 13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." This is the nature of the Christian life, which is the nature of the spiritual battle we're in. —We can't do anything in our own strength. But we can do it in the strength of our LORD. And that's what Paul was saying. "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

If it is God's will, whether a wife is being a godly helper, or a husband being a loving leader ... and I like what Mike (*Black*) said, the note that he gave to his son and son-in-law, "As a husband, make it your goal to serve your wife as soon as you get up in the morning." That is a good goal, and a good purpose. That's what we are to be. Men

are to be leaders in the home, but they're to be loving leaders, and they are to be servants. That's what our Savior was.

And so, whether it's that, or all of us being careful students of the Word of God and diligent in our prayer life, if it's God's will, then we can do it. And that should be our mental attitude. That's the way Caleb approached the giants. That's the way Othniel did as well.

But for Israel, years of war, 'the seven years war' had taken its toll. The nation was tired of fighting the good fight. They had become restless under that discipline. And that becomes evident in the remaining chapters. Their failure would have consequences, as the Book of Judges shows. The nation that conquered the Canaanites would become servants of the Canaanites—and of others. After seven years of war, they were weary, so weary, they were not pursuing. So, we read statements like, "But they did not drive out the Canaanites." Or, "The Canaanites persisted in living in that land." Or, "As for the Jebusites, they could not drive them out."

There's another statement we find repeated, and I think that may give us a clue to this failure. It's at the end of chapters 11 and 14. You will recall it. "Then the land had rest from war." I like translating that, "the land was quiet from war." That's the normal meaning of this word that's translated rest. All quiet on the western front; the guns are silent, there's peace. That's a time of joy. It's a time of rest or relaxing. The long conflict is over. That's a blessing. We can leave the trenches and the foxholes. Israel could lay down their swords and take up their plows.

But quiet can be deceiving, especially in the spiritual conflict, because the enemy can also be quiet. —But it never rests. It's always active. And when we relax, we let our guard down and the enemy strikes. That happened here. The giants move back into Hebron. The Jebusites reconquered Jerusalem. It happened to David. He enjoyed victory after victory, but then he decided he needed some R&R—he needed some rest and relaxation, some rest and recuperation. So he skipped the battle for some of that—for some quietness at home. And that's when he had his great moral failure.

Peace and quiet is a blessing. We need physical and spiritual rest. We need recuperation. We can burn out. That happens, too. That's part of the battle that we must guard against. But we never, never take off our armor. And we never rest from fellowship with the LORD. We always need to be in study, and we need to be in prayer, and we need to be in communion with the saints. We need to be together, functioning as the body, encouraging and supporting one another.

We learn from failure. David learned the forgiveness and grace of God from his great failure. Some of the great Psalms came out of that experience. We learn that, too. We learn from the difficulties of life. And from those failures and from those struggles we learn that we cannot succeed on our own. We cannot succeed in our own strength, but only through the sovereign help of God.

I think I may have said this last week. I'll say it again. I cannot emphasize enough, and I won't stop emphasizing the great and fundamental truth of God's absolute sovereignty. Because we can only succeed by leaning wholly on Him. And we won't do that if we don't understand that He's absolutely sovereign. And when we understand that He is, that He is sovereign in the little things of life, the daily details of life, we will understand that He is sovereign over the great things as well. He is sovereign over time and history. And that's a great encouragement. —Should be.

The description of Christ in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 3, is to the point. It was a description by the author that was carefully crafted. He says of Christ, He "...upholds all things..." And what that word 'uphold' means is not just holding them up, like some great Atlas holding the world up, but it really means 'carrying all things', 'bearing all things along'. So your life and time and everything is being carried by Christ along a path to a destination, an appointed end.

And this portion of the Book of Joshua illustrates that great truth. The conquest of Canaan was a means to an end, which was the allotment of the land, which was the inheritance of the tribes. And time is moving toward the allotment of the inheritance for the people of God in the kingdom of God. There's meaning to history. We are moving to an age of quiet from conflict, of peace and glory.

But today is the day of war. It's a time of spiritual conflict. It is daily and it is long. It is the protracted conflict. And we can fight with confidence and boldness because Christ, our Joshua, has already defeated the enemy. He did that at the cross, and He gained, for Himself and for us the kingdom to come. We are moving toward our inheritance. Now, all that we do now in this spiritual war that we fight, will count for that day, and count for all eternity.

So we're not to let up. We're to be like Caleb, Othniel, and Achsah. We are to be courageous and persistent. As Paul told the Ephesians in Ephesians 6 (vs10&11), 'Be strong in the LORD. Put on the full armor of God and stand firm against the schemes of the devil.'

The fact is, in the midst of conflict, we have peace, and we have quiet. We have the quiet life, because every believer in Jesus Christ has peace with God. —No condemnation. We have entered into spiritual rest. We have justification. We have been declared righteous before God. We have been acquitted of our crimes, absolved of our debts, forgiven of our sins, because Christ paid the penalty. He paid the price at His death. He suffered the penalty in our place. We got all of that at the moment faith, when we believed in Christ as LORD and Savior. And at that moment, that very moment, we joined ourselves to Him, to His sacrifice and righteousness. And that's how God sees us, in Christ, joined to Him as perfect and righteous as He is. —And what a blessing that is. And so we go forward with confidence that we're in Him. We're secure and we're able. We're able to do the things that He would have us to do.

But if you've not believed in Christ, it's a very different thing for you. You have none of that. You're still guilty. And time and history are moving toward a very different end for you—one of darkness and doom. Believe that. Come to Christ. Trust in Him. Through faith, lay hold of the cross, His sacrifice and payment for sin, and receive at that moment forgiveness and life everlasting. We have that by God's grace. We receive it through faith alone. 'So seek and you will find, ask and it will be given.' (Luke 11:9). May

God help you to do that, and help all of us to live that life that we've seen patterned here in these of this chapter. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for Your goodness to us, and for the three examples we have here. Caleb, Othniel, Achsah, in various ways, but they show us the kind of life we're to live in this present age—this age of spiritual conflict. We live under Your sovereign hand, we live under Your sovereign governance as You are moving the ages to their glorious end in the kingdom of God. But in this meantime, in this in between time, we fight the fight. Help us to do that faithfully and well. There's great, great reward in it. May we understand that—and may we do it out of great love for You and for all that You've done for us.

And Father, we're now going to look to You and remember what You have done for us in Your Son, as we take the LORD's Supper. And we pray that You would prepare our hearts for that. What a blessing to do this, to recall, as we do weekly now, the person and work of Your Son, and what He's done for us. As we reflect upon that it should create within us hearts of gratitude and love, and a desire to serve from the right motive. So LORD, I pray that You would create that within us. We look to You to bless now. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)