

Our Portion Forever

Jonathan K. Dodson | Joshua 13-14 | April 24, 2018

The things we really care about make it into our prayers. When we're really desperate, we ask. Do you care about Austin? Then come ask God with us to renew our city. On 5/12 we will be praying, gathering, with Christians from across the city to pray for our city. We'll meet on the southern steps of the capitol at 10am and make our way to various prayer stations: 6th street, Under the Bridge, UT, Auditorium Shores. City Life will host the prayer time at Auditorium Shores to pray for unity in our churches and unity in our city. Put this down in your calendar. Make it a CG event. Join us as we ask big and specific things for the flourishing of our city and the glory of God. Pray512.com.

I Myself

How do you sustain faith, service to others, missional community over a lifetime, when you're tired? Our passage addresses this question: "[Now Joshua was old and advanced in years, and the Lord said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to possess"](#) (1). Joshua's age reflects decades of war. Israel has accomplished *a lot*. They've taken most of Canaan. And so chapter 13 begins the distribution of the much-awaited land, the inheritance promised to Israel and to Abraham. The unconquered regions described in 2-6 are more or less the extremities. For all intents and purposes, mission accomplished, a truly remarkable feat. And this is when we are tempted to coast. Got the family, settled into the career, kid raised, but God's says *yet there remains very much land to possess*. Your work is not done. You've accomplished a lot, but there is still more to do. Which is the last thing you want to hear when you're worn out, tired, stretched thin. There was a season in my life when I was utterly overwhelmed. A friend, a former elder, tried to unseat me from leadership, bent ears and manipulated hearts. A church split seemed imminent. I was defenseless, exhausted, in profound pain, and wanted to quit. A mentor told me, You can't quit but God may call you to finish. There's a difference between giving up and seeing a season through. God told me to keep going. So we did. That was three years ago. This month we celebrate 10 years as a church. It's all of grace, I tell you, all of grace. But there will always be obstacles in doing God's work. Wars aren't fought for nothing. Kingdom things require a cost. City Life is ten, and we'll have a big celebration June 3, but there are decades to come. Don't quit. Finish the race. The Lord has given us the vision of being a church that renews cities socially, spiritually, and culturally with the gospel of Jesus. A lot remains to be done. And if it's a biblical vision *it will require more service, not less; more generosity, not less, more leaders, not less; more forgiveness, not less, more faith, not less*. And when you consider the immensity of the task, the demand of the work, it's easy to be dissuaded. Excuses at hand, devilish justifications abound. "There are too many things I haven't experienced. Sunday Funday." In youthful glee we *can waste our passion on what matters least*. Or "I have too much to do. My family needs me." As we age, and move into the demands of marriage and family, we can easily *lose passion for what matters most*. Waste passion on what matters least; lose passion for what matters most all while there remains much land to possess, so to speak. Verses 2-6 detail the remaining enemies that still need to be taken to fulfill God's promise. We're asking for *more* this year. More of Christ, of his church, of his mission, which means more leaders, City Groups, salvations, and a downtown space for gospel ministry. *There are a thousand obstacles, but*

for every obstacle there is a greater grace. When I was worn thin in that awful season, I stretched my arms out in prayer, and cried aloud I'm sinking Lord, save me, save your church. Minutes later, we received a message from a friend. She said she felt God was prompting her to share the story of when Peter walked out on the water, and that when he began to sink, he cried out to Jesus, and that like Peter, Jesus was extending his arm to me, that he would pull me up. I could go no further, but Christ pulled me up. I wanted to quit, but he said let's finish. For every obstacle there is a greater grace. When you can go no further, Christ will pull you up. To aging Joshua he said, I myself will drive them out from before the people of Israel. Only allot the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you. (6) *I myself. Grammatically redundant, existentially critical.* Sometimes we need to hear things twice, three times. Samuel the prophet heard the Lord's voice not once, not twice, but three times before he knew it was the Lord. The Lord knows your obstacles, your struggles, and he's saying to you, "I myself will do it." When you cannot carry yourself, *he* will carry you. When you feel like you cannot serve, he will serve you. More work, more ministry, remains, and he will do it. For every obstacle, there is a greater grace.

My Portion

Joshua moves forward with the land distribution. While this may seem boring to us, it was monumental for them. It was the culmination of promises, their long awaited award. YHWH would give them his sanctified land to dwell in. Finally, inheritance! But the Levite tribe received no inheritance, no land to call their own. Three times we are told, "but to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance! Why were they left out? Levites were the priestly tribe, called to administer sacrifices in worship on behalf of the worshipper: To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance. The offerings by fire to the Lord God of Israel are their inheritance, as he said to him" (14). Offerings by fire are their inheritance. What could he mean? If you go back to Numbers 18, you find the Levites are permitted a portion of the sacrificial offering to live off of. The portion is their inheritance. In fact the word portion is closely related to the word for inheritance. They live off, literally, the inheritance. It is their portion. Now a few weeks ago there was some scuttlebutt on twitter about Brooklyn bbq taking over the world. We all know Texas bbq is the best: Saltlick, Blacks, Stiles Switch. And when you're eating it, sometimes you're moved to say, teeth sinking into brisket, "I've died and gone to heaven. I can't live without it." The Levites sank their teeth into a portion they couldn't live without. Better than heaven. What is it? The Lord says: I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel (Num 18:20; Josh 13:33). God himself, the thing they can't live without. And so every offering became a reminder: I AM YOUR PORTION. Every sacrifice: I AM YOUR INHERITANCE. And *He* isn't restricted to the Levites. The portion idea broadens to all people of God when the psalm says, Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (73:25-26). God is our portion. He is our life. Do you see what they are onto—their portion, their life, their strength, their very great reward—is God himself, *forever*. This is what got them through their relentless, landless service. Is God your portion or are you wasting your passion on what matters least? Is Lord your inheritance or are you losing your passion for what matters most? My flesh and my heart may fail but *God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever*. Consider how long God will be your inheritance. Forever, no expiration date on satisfaction and strength! Then let's get used to it! Let's get pull our inheritance

into the present! You see our work, our callings, our mission is meant to show off our inheritance. To attempt great things because we have a great God. We embrace obstacles and cost because the Lord Jesus absorbed the ultimate cost and pulls us up! We serve because Christ is the strength of our heart. We gather and scatter Sunday after Sunday, to remind ourselves of the true portion. Would would it look like to view every Sunday gathering as a reminder *God is your portion*. Every CG that *Christ is your chief delight*? For every obstacle there is a greater grace, because Christ became the sacrifice *who is our portion*! Last weekend I drove back to my hometown to celebrate my grandfather's 90th birthday. We gathered at Millard's Crossing, a collection of turn of the century homes, on green grounds, and celebrated his life with a big four-hour party. I saddled up next to him and asked, how's it feel to be ninety? He said, oh Johnny, my father died at 24, my mother at 30. And then he just sat in the thought, soaked in the grace. You could see the awe in his eyes. God gives the life, the strength, the portion to serve, persevere, and live for others. Church, let's sit in the costly grace of Christ, and get to work knowing he Himself will do it.