

INDIVIDUAL CONQUEST OF OUR INHERITANCE

"Be thou strong and very courageous." – Joshua 1:7.

THE words of our text were addressed by the Lord to Joshua, who was leader of Israel after the death of Moses. He had special need of these encouraging words. The Israelites were a stiff-necked generation. It was difficult for any one to be their leader. Especially difficult was it because Moses had been for many years with them. It is always difficult for a smaller man to take a larger man's place.

In some respects it was easier to direct Israel while they were anticipating the coming into the Promised Land, before they had entered it. During the forty years in the wilderness they had learned to depend on the Lord. In a few brief words we have given us quite a clear idea of the Lord's manner of dealing with His people during these forty years. Moses, in exhorting the people to fear and love the Lord, and in recounting their provocations of Him, tells them that they shall possess the Land, and adds, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

"Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." (Deut. 8:2-5.) Israel had very few battles during the time of their wandering. The Amalekites had had some little skirmishes with them, but on the whole they had experienced very little

trouble, [R5296 : page 251] and yet they had rebelled against the Lord and against Moses more than once.

Now, their enemies were entrenched in the Land of Canaan, and it would require strength and courage to take the Land. Their instructions from the Lord were that they should occupy Canaan. God was taking the land from the Canaanites because, like the Sodomites, they had gone as far in their wickedness as Divine Wisdom saw best to permit. Instead of taking the Canaanites away as the Sodomites had been taken away, the Lord caused the Israelites to *conquer* them and to *wrest* the land from them.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN A TYPE

In Israel's taking possession of the land of Canaan, we believe there was a typical significance. In some respects the Israelites, warring against the Canaanites, typified the war that the New Creature has with the flesh. In proportion as the New Creature takes possession of the entrenched positions of the old creature, it overcomes and gets possession of the land. The New Creatures, God's people, are under the leadership of the antitypical Joshua. They are to overcome the weaknesses and meannesses of the fallen nature, to the best of their ability.

In the case of Natural Israelites with the Canaanites, the latter were strongly entrenched in the land, and they were not to be overcome without *many battles*. The Canaanites had their mountain fastnesses, to which they could retreat. These typify the fastnesses in our nature to which the fallen inclinations retreat when we find it impossible as New Creatures to vanquish them. As St. Paul says, "Ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. 5:17.) But our ability to gain the victory will be in proportion to our faith in God and our reliance on Him.

Thus it was with the Israelites. In proportion as they trusted the Lord, they had success in getting possession of the land, conquering

their inheritance. With the exception of the tribe of Levi, a certain inheritance was given to each tribe. So with us as individual New Creatures. There is a certain inheritance to be apportioned to each of us. We cannot conquer for each other. Each must conquer his own inheritance individually.

The words of our text were addressed to Joshua, the leader of Israel. The words can be understood as referring to all the Israelites, but especially to Joshua because he was their leader. The word Joshua means *savior, deliverer*. The Greek form of the Hebrew word *Joshua* is *Jesus*. As Joshua was to deliver the Lord's people, and give them possession of the Land of Promise, so Jesus is to deliver God's Spiritual Israel, and give them their inheritance.

The words of our text then implied that there would be trials and difficulties connected with the conquest of Canaan: "Be thou strong and *very* courageous." Those trials and difficulties would require strength and courage in the typical Israelite. Likewise this is true of all who would be sharers with our Lord in the antitypical Promised Land.

There is a difference between being *strong* and being *courageous*. One might be strong, invulnerable in the position he has taken, and yet not be courageous for further conquests. The difference between these two qualities is particularly illustrated in the Little Flock and the Great Company. The Lord's true people should be strong in their determination to lay down their lives in self-sacrifice, that by laying down the earthly life they may become partakers of the Divine life. God has no blessing for those who will not put forth earnest effort.

Even the Great Company must be strong, or they will not get the palms of victory. The difference between the Little Flock and the Great Company is that while the Great Company will finally overcome, with the Lord's help, yet they will not have been very courageous. Therefore they cannot be of the Little Flock, who are

close followers of the great Leader, our Joshua, in battling for their life, gladly laying down their lives in the service of Jehovah. Joshua represents the "more than conqueror" class. The strength of the Lord is supplied to this class. Therefore they are very courageous in overcoming everything that is in opposition to the Divine will.

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