



hold your ground

TEACHING SUMMARY

For seven long years, Israel had marched, fought, waited, and watched the Lord move with unmistakable power. Kings had fallen. Strongholds had crumbled. The central, southern, and northern campaigns had all run their course, and what once seemed impossible now stood accomplished. The land of Canaan, though not yet fully subdued in every corner, lay open before them. The strength of the enemy had been broken. Israel now stood in a position of victory.

But as you turn to the Book of Joshua, chapter 13, something shifts. The tone changes, almost quietly at first, but decisively. The movement of the book turns from conquest to distribution, from battlefields to boundaries, from warfare to stewardship. And if we are not careful, we might be tempted to skim these chapters, assuming they hold less weight than the dramatic victories that came before.

That would be a mistake.

Because what unfolds here is not less important.

Joshua is now advanced in age, somewhere between eighty-five and ninety years old. He has endured the strain of leadership, carried the responsibility of command, and seen the Lord's faithfulness through years of conflict. Yet the Lord's words to him are not about what has been done, but about what remains: "There is still very much land to possess."

It is a striking statement. The war has been won, and yet the work is unfinished.

Joshua's role, however, is no longer to lead armies into battle. His assignment has changed. The warrior is now a steward. He will divide the land, assigning each tribe its inheritance, marking out boundaries that reflect the Lord's promise. But once that division is complete, the responsibility will no longer rest on his shoulders.

It fell to the people.

Each tribe, each clan, each family will receive their portion, and with it comes a charge that cannot be ignored. They are to occupy the land, to defend it, and to hold their ground. The word "possess" is not passive. It carries the sense of seizing, driving out, expelling what remains. This is not a matter of stepping into finished homes and settling into ease. The land still contains resistance. Pockets of the enemy remain. What has been secured positionally must now be walked out practically.

This is the difference between inheritance received and inheritance stewarded.

God had given the land. The greater battle had been won. The enemy's back had been broken. But now, every acre would require attention. Every boundary would need to be known and guarded. Every place left unattended would be vulnerable to intrusion. This was not a brief assignment. It was lifelong. It would require vigilance, effort, and faith that did not fade once the major victories were behind them.

And as these chapters unfold, we see how the tribes responded to that responsibility. If we step in closer and look specifically at Judah, one figure rises immediately into focus: Caleb.

At eighty-five years old, Caleb is not asking for rest. He is not searching for ease or comfort. Instead, he steps forward with a bold and almost startling request. Before Joshua can even finalize Judah's allotment, Caleb speaks up and essentially says, "Give me this hill country."

The land he is asking for is difficult terrain. It is occupied by the descendants of Anak, giants with fortified cities, men who would intimidate most and deter many. But Caleb is not deterred. Decades earlier, when the land was first scouted, he had seen the same giants and responded with faith rather than fear. Now, all these years later, that faith has not dimmed.

Scripture had already said there was something different about him, that he had "a different spirit." And here it is, on full display.

He remembers the promise spoken to him through Moses, and he has carried it through wilderness wandering and years of war. Now, standing at the edge of fulfillment, he does not ask for something manageable. He asks for what will require him to trust God fully.

The place he requests is Hebron.

And Hebron is no ordinary location. If you trace it back through the Book of Genesis, you find it tied deeply to the story of the patriarchs. It was there that Abraham purchased a burial site for Sarah, refusing to take it as a gift and insisting on paying for it in full. That act marked the first legal possession of the promised land by God's people. Later, it became the burial place of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their families.

It was sacred ground. And now, it was occupied by the enemy.

Caleb's request, then, is not just about land. It is about reclaiming what had been promised, what had been purchased, what belonged to the people of God but was currently under the control of those who had no rightful claim to it.

His response is simple and resolute. He will drive them out. He will take possession. He will occupy and retain what has been given.

And he does exactly that.

Hebron is taken. The giants are driven out. And in time, this very place becomes the location where David is anointed king. What Caleb fought for becomes part of a much larger unfolding story in God's plan.

But Caleb's faith does not remain isolated. It shapes those around him.

His nephew, Othniel, rises in response to a challenge and takes territory of his own. His daughter, Achsah, displays a boldness that mirrors her father's spirit. Living in the dry region of the Negev, she does not shrink back or complain about the difficulty of her inheritance. Instead, she approaches her father and asks for springs of water. She does not ask for a different portion. She asks for what will make her portion flourish.

And she receives it.

There is something powerful about that kind of faith. It does not merely endure. It multiplies. It shapes families. It sets a tone that others cannot ignore.

Yet even within Judah, the story is not entirely one of success.

At the close of the chapter, there is a sobering note. Jerusalem, though struck by Israel, was not fully driven out. The enemy remained. Over time, that foothold would grow. What had once been subdued was not retained.

Jerusalem, of all places.

The implications are significant. Ground that is not held does not remain neutral. It becomes contested again.

A similar pattern appears with the Philistines. Though Israel had moments of victory against them, they failed to maintain control over the coastal regions. These were not insignificant enemies. They were advanced, organized, and equipped with iron chariots, the military advantage of their day. What could have been contained early would later become a persistent and painful opposition.

It is the Philistines who rise to prominence in the days of Samson, and later stand as a primary threat during the reigns of Saul and David. One of their warriors, Goliath, becomes a symbol of that ongoing conflict.

What was not fully dealt with early did not disappear. It grew.

When we turn to Ephraim and Manasseh, the issue deepens even further.

Their problem is not merely a failure to retain ground. Sometimes, they refuse to take it at all.

Instead of driving out the Canaanites as commanded, they chose a different approach. They allowed them to remain and put them to forced labor. It may have seemed practical. It may have even appeared beneficial in the short term. But it was disobedience.

And over time, that decision carries consequences. What they did not drive out, they eventually could not drive out.

There is a sobering principle at work here. The Lord does not do for His people what He has clearly commanded them to do. When obedience is delayed or avoided, the cost is not static. It compounds.

Even more revealing is their response. They complain. They claim that their land is insufficient, that there is not enough room for them.

Yet the problem is not the size of their inheritance. It is their unwillingness to step into it fully.

Joshua's response cuts through their complaint with clarity. If they are as great as they claim, then they should go up and take the land. Everything they need has already been provided.

Positionally, it is theirs. Practically, they must walk it out.

But they hesitate. They resist. They want the benefit without the battle. They want the landscape to change without engaging in the work required to change it.

And in that moment, the contrast between Caleb and these tribes becomes unmistakable.

One sees the promise and moves forward in faith, regardless of difficulties. The others see the difficulty and shrink back, despite the promise.

As Joshua continues to speak, his words carry both challenge and invitation: how long will you put off taking possession of the land?

It is a question that reaches beyond Israel.

Because through Jesus Christ, the greater Joshua, an inheritance has been secured that is not temporary or geographical, but eternal and spiritual. As the Epistle to the Ephesians declares, every spiritual blessing has already been given in Him. The work has been accomplished. The victory has been secured.

And yet, the call remains. To walk in it. To explore it. To occupy, defend, and hold the ground that has been entrusted.

It is possible to receive an inheritance and never fully step into it. To live with portions unexplored, edges untouched, depth unsearched.

It is possible to tolerate what should be removed, to manage what should be put to death, to leave borders unguarded and wonder why intrusion comes.

Scripture calls for something different. It calls for vigilance, for faithfulness, for a refusal to coexist with what God has said must go. It calls for a life that aligns practically with what is already true positionally.

And it presses deeper still, asking not only how we are living, but what we are leaving behind.

Because faith, or the lack of it, does not remain contained. It shapes those who come after.

Caleb's life stands as a testament to enduring trust. At eighty-five, he is still pressing forward, still asking for difficult ground, still believing that the Lord will give victory. His life speaks not only to his generation but to the next.

The question, then, becomes unavoidable.
What kind of example is being set?

What is being modeled in the daily choices, in the quiet decisions to obey or to delay, to confront or to tolerate?

Because in the end, this is not merely about land or territory.

It is about stewardship.
It is about faith lived out.

It is about taking what has been graciously given and refusing to leave it unattended.

The inheritance has been secured.
The ground has been assigned.
And the call remains steady and clear: hold
your ground