

Living Large for the Lord!

Introduction:

- I. Living large is an idiom that usually refers to living an extravagant lifestyle, often beyond one's means. However, sometimes it is simply used to denote living life to its fullest; a life in which one not only dreams and thinks big, but he goes after his dreams and pursues his goals with maximum effort. In this lesson I want to talk to you for a little while about living large for the Lord. To live large for the Lord is to live the kind of victorious life that we were meant to live when we obeyed the gospel of Christ. A life of spiritual vigor and vivacity in which we are striving every day to reach our full potential for Jesus, making a real difference in our homes, our churches and our communities by allowing the glories light of the gospel to shine in us.

- II. Sadly though, there are too many Christians who aren't living large for the Lord. There are too many in the body of Christ who fail to reach their full potential. This really isn't anything new. The people of God have always struggled with living maximum lives for the Lord. Even as the Jews were conquering the land of Canaan, some were having this problem. Open your Bibles to Josh. 17 and I want to read a little bit from that text (**Josh 17:12-18**).

These people of Manasseh are an illustration for us today of some who failed to reach their potential and I want us to see why they failed and see if we can't learn from their mistakes. There were three problems these children of Manasseh had that caused them to fail to reach their full potential.

Lesson:

I. **The Problem of Partial Possession**

This was the first failure of the children of Manasseh—they didn't completely possess their possession. Look at verse 12:

Josh 17:12

12 Yet the people of Manasseh could not take possession of those cities, but the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land.

God said, "Drive out the Canaanites" but instead the children of Manasseh found themselves keeping company with them. Now, who are the Canaanites? Well obviously the physical Canaanites were the descendants of Canaan who occupied the land of promised before the Jews. However, to us, the Canaanites represent the influence of Satan. Remember that the Canaanites were demon-worshippers; thus, they needed to be evicted from the land so that God's children wouldn't be negatively influenced by them.

Let's stop for a second and observe what Canaan represents. We have said many times that the land of Canaan was a type of heaven. We know this from Hebrews 4. But the interesting thing about biblical types is that they can typify more than one

thing. While Canaan is primarily a type of heaven, it is also a type of full and victorious living in Christ. Think about it. Egypt is a type of the world. The Jews were slaves in Egypt until they were set free by the power of God. Now, the Jews being delivered from Egypt was a type of our being delivered from the corruption of the world. But what happened to the Jews after they were set free? They didn't go right into Canaan did they? No, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. The point of it is this: Canaan wasn't an escape from bondage; they were already free at that point. Instead, Canaan is where the Jews could become the people God wanted them to be. Canaan was the place where they could reach their full potential on earth. That's our Canaan, ladies and gentlemen, the fullness that we can have in Christ. The place where we can be all that God wants us to be and reach our full potential. But we have our Canaanites as well. Again, the Canaanites speak of the influence of Satan that keeps us from living large for the Lord. But here is the thing, brethren, we don't have to keep the Canaanites around. We don't have to share the land with them. In fact, God's command is to drive the Canaanites out. The problem is just like our predecessors we sometimes fail to do this and so we end up with only partial possession and that's a problem.

Listen to me: the Canaanites must go! There can be no compromise on this point brethren. We are always going to be troubled as long as we are keeping company with Canaanites. Now, I said that the Canaanites represent the influence of Satan, but let's get a little more specific. The influence of Satan manifests itself in our lives by unrepented and unconfessed sins that dwell in us. We ought to have victory over those sins but instead we allow them to hang around. Do you know what God's plan for Manasseh was? It was complete victory. He didn't want them to share the land with the Canaanites. He wanted them to drive them out altogether. Men, women and children had to go. God wanted them to remove every trace of the Canaanites and Canaanite living. Now, do you know what God's plan for us is? Complete victory. God doesn't want us to share our land either, that is, He doesn't want us to share our life with sin. He wants us to drive sin out completely. Oh I know that individual sins might sneak across the border once in a while but when they do we have to expel them quickly. We cannot, listen to me, we must not allow the Canaanites to dwell in us because if we do, instead of living full, victorious lives in Christ, that is, instead of living large for the Lord, we are living defeated lives.

Do you know what General Douglas MacArthur said, when he came back from Korea? He said, ***"In war, there is no substitute for victory."*** That's right isn't it? Oh, there is an alternative—that's defeat; but there's no substitute. In war you either gain the victory or you are defeated. This is why it is so important to expel the Canaanites from our lives. There can be no backing up. There can no giving up and there can be no letting up because there is no substitute for victory in war and we, brethren, are in a spiritual warfare. The only way to live our lives to the fullest in Christ is to overcome any sin that is trying to occupy a part of our territory.

It might be sins of the flesh like fornication or drunkenness. It might be sins of the world like pride or materialism. It might be sins of the mind like apathy or discontentment, but the point of it is this: we must fight to keep sins off of our land and out of our territory because if we let them stay we stand defeated. Our goal, then, should be total and complete victory over Satan and sin.

Let's learn from the children of Manasseh. They gave in and let the Canaanites stay in the land because they thought they could control them.

Josh 17:13

13 Now when the people of Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

At first the record says they could not drive them out (**ver. 12**). However, once they grew strong and got organized it is no longer they could not, but instead they simply did not. They made a conscious decision to allow these Canaanites to dwell with them. Why? Because they thought they could make slaves of them and control them.

Don't we do the same thing sometimes? There are certain sins we think we can control and so instead of driving them out of our lives we let them hang around.

- We do this with anger (We think we can hide anger in the back of our minds).
- We sometimes do this with lust (We think we can control it while doing things that produce lustful thoughts).
- We do it with sinful people (We think we can make friends of the world without any repercussions).

Prov 13:20

20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.
NKJV

I don't care who we are, we are not strong enough to hang out with just any kind of people. Ask Solomon about that. He was the wisest man on earth and had a heart like his father David. Then he started to keep company with Canaanites, married many foreign women and what happened? The Bible says that they turned his heart away from the Lord. Ladies and gentlemen, Solomon should serve as a warning to all of us (**1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-18**).

Let me ask you, "Do you have some Canaanite that you're allowing to hang around in your life?" You say, "Yes but it hasn't enslaved me. I can take it or leave it!" Yea, that is what brethren always say. I think of those who think they can dabble with social drinking. "I can take it or leave it," they say. "I'm in control." Really, why is it that those who say they can take it or leave it always seem to take it? I hear smokers say that all the time. "I can quit whenever I want to." The problem is they never seem to want to. I wonder who really has victory over who. You think that you're strong enough to control certain Canaanites, but the truth is as soon as you think you can control sin, sin is in control of you.

I heard of a family who had a little lion cub that somehow they'd gotten, and they thought they would raise it as a pet so they kept it in the apartment. One night they stepped across the hall to visit in the adjoining apartment, and when they stepped back in, they heard crying coming from the nursery. They ran in and saw that that lion cub had eaten several fingers of

their little baby's hand. Can you imagine such a thing? Can you imagine how they felt about that lion cub, having kept it there in the house as a pet, thinking it was something they could control?

Peter reminds us that the devil is a roaring lion (**1 Pet. 5:8**). Now, you don't sit down and try to make peace with a lion, do you? Either you get the lion or the lion gets you. We are not to sit down and try to peacefully coexist with Satan; we are to have complete victory over Satan by expelling his influence from our lives.

Do you have some pet sin that's going to rise up and devour something precious in your life? There were certain Canaanites that the children of Manasseh thought they could control and it kept them from full victory.

So then, too many of us are not living large for the Lord and reaching the full potential that God wants for us because there are Canaanites that we fail to drive out, that is, we are allowing Satan to influence us by the ongoing presence of sin in our lives. Did you know that you ought to be able to say, ***"I thank God there is no unrepented, unconfessed sin in my life? I thank God that Jesus Christ has set me free."*** And let me tell you sometime, ladies and gentlemen, Jesus Christ did not come to save us in our sins; He came to save us from our sin. He has done His part, the question is will you and I do our part by removing the Canaanites and having full possession of our lives? Listen to Paul:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2)

Rom 6:12

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. KJV

What a tragedy it is that some us who have obeyed the gospel and entered into Canaan are still keeping company with Canaanites that should have been moved out a long time ago!

II. The Problem of Paralyzing Pride

This is another thing that keeps people from living large for the Lord and reaching their full potential in Christ. Look at verse 14:

Josh 17:14

14 And the children of Joseph spoke unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto? KJV

Now get this. These are the same people who are unable to drive out the Canaanites; the same people who were unable to possess the lot that God had given them

and now they are talking about what a great people they are. This is an example of paralyzing pride and it's another thing that stops us from living large for the Lord. There are two problems with pride. First of all it is deceptive. Pride causes us to believe that we are something that we are not. I recently saw a news piece in which a woman was talking about the trials of being beautiful. How that other women didn't like her and would say nasty things to her and about her just because she was prettier than they were. Truth be told, she wasn't as pretty as she thought she was. This is the problem with pride.

Gal 6:3

3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Now this is just the beginning of the problem. The second problem with pride is what this self-deception leads to. If a person thinks he has achieved something he hasn't, he is going to stop trying to achieve it, isn't he? Listen to me: a part of living large for the Lord is realizing that we always have room for improvement. We can always do better. This attitude moves us to put forth maximum effort in our Christianity. Paul is a great example of this (**Phil. 3:12-14**). Why did Paul constantly "press on?" It was precisely because he knew that he wasn't yet complete in Christ. What does a runner do once he crosses the finish line? He immediately slows down, does he? In a matter of seconds he has stopped moving altogether. Why? He has crossed the finished line. He has reached the goal. To him the race is over. Now, spiritually speaking we won't ever reach the finish line in this life. The race will not be over until either we die or Christ comes back. In the mean time we must keep on pressing.

Let me ask you, are you satisfied with where you are spiritually? Do you feel that you are all that you can be? If so, it's probable that you have stopped pressing on and the truth is pressing on is a part of living large for the Lord. Pressing on is a part of living a full and rich life for Christ. Our faith can be much stronger. Our knowledge can be much deeper. Our commitment can be much more consistent. But one thing we much do is keep pressing on. But pride will paralyze us and keep us from straining forward towards our full potential. We must all humble ourselves and realize that we can be so much more than we are right now if we just keep pressing on.

III. The Problem of Dereliction of Duty

Joshua 17:14-15 (NKJV)

14 Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?" 15 So Joshua answered them, "If you are a great people, then go up to the forest country and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you."

We have seen that these children of Manasseh have failed in their primary duty of driving out the Canaanites. This led to their not occupying the land fully. But now we see they had another obstacle that was stopping them from occupying the full-

ness of their territory. Truth be told, it was a combination of obstacles, but I want to especially emphasize their dereliction of duty.

The people of Manasseh were crying for more land. They weren't satisfied with the allotment that they had been given by God and so they were saying to Joshua, "We want more land. We want more blessings." They wanted more, more, more and they wanted God to give it to them on a silver platter. But notice the response of Joshua's. Joshua says, You want more land, clear out the land that you've already been given. You see, they were a great and numerous people. They needed that forest land. The problem was it was going to take some hard work for it to be inhabitable. So instead of using what they had, they wanted God to give them more of something else. This same attitude stops brethren from living large for the Lord today.

Someone says, "I want to know more of the Bible. Teach me more of the Bible." The problem is he is not obeying the part of the Bible he already knows. You want to understand God's Word, you want God to open up your mind, and pour His Word into your heart, then you need to start obeying the part that you already know. You need to clear off the forest and occupy that land.

Somebody says, "Oh, I wish I had more money. Why doesn't God bless me with more money?" Well I can't be sure about that. However, there is a biblical principal that could be applicable to our financial situation among other things. Jesus set forth this principle in **Matt. 25:21**. He said, "**You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.**" Now again, this principle isn't applicable only to our money but I don't know that I would exclude our money from this principle either, would you? Listen: some Christians don't have more money because they already have all God can trust them with right now. If you are not faithful with a little, God is not going to trust you with a lot.

You say, "I wish I had a million dollars." Really, what would you do with a million dollars? You say, "I would give to the poor, and give much more to the church, I would do this; I'd do that." Well, let me tell you what is generally true. If you had a million dollars, you'd do with that million the same thing that you are doing with the hundred that you already have. If you are not laying by in store as you have prospered now, chances are you wouldn't do it if you had a million dollars. The Bible says, "**He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much**" (**Luke 16:10**). Listen to me: God has given us specific duties as it relates to our finances. Have you ever thought about that? Most of us know that we are to give upon the first day of the week (**1Cor. 16:1-2**), but that is not all. Generally speaking we must be good stewards of our money (**1 Tim. 6:6-10**). Now the point of it is this—before you expect God to bless you with a better financial situation, you ought to do your duty and take proper care of the money you have right now. Clear out the forest that God has given you before you start asking for new land.

Someone says, "I sure would like a bigger and better job, or even a promotion on the job that I already have." Let me tell you what to do—go back to your job Monday morning and you do your job like it's never been done before. You put everything you have into it. You say, "Yea, but I can't stand that ole' two-legged rascal I work

for.” Let me tell you something my friend: You’re not working for him; you’re working for Jesus Christ.

Col 3:23-24

23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Do you want to live large for the Lord and reach your full potential? Make sure you are not derelict in duty in any area of your life. Use every blessing that God has already blessed you with. Use every talent that God has already giving you. Don’t keep asking God for more and more; cut down the trees where you are, and you will be in position to live large for the Lord.

Conclusion:

Don’t you want to live large for the Lord? Don’t you want to live to your full potential? Wouldn’t you like to be all that you could be for Jesus? Well, don’t be like the children of Manasseh; children who fail to possess their possessions, are paralyzing by pride and derelict in duty. Instead remove any influence of Satan in your life by getting rid of any unrepented sin, humble yourself and use what God has given you right now.