

KEY TEXT

Exodus 23:27-30 (NKJV)

Verse 27 – “I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.

Verse 28- And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.

Verse 29 – I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.

Verse 30 – Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.

INTRODUCTION

1. Little by little

"Little by little" – we hate these words when it comes to our success, wealth, career development, character formation, answered prayers and victory.

We want all these things to be done or given
INSTANTLY.

Our common malady is IMPATIENCE.

TITLE:
“LITTLE BY LITTLE”

Outline:

- **Background of the key text**
- **Why “little by little”?**
- **What are the good things that come about “little by little”?**

MAIN POINTS

(I) BACKGROUND OF OUR KEY TEXT

In **Exodus 23:27-30**, God promised to drive out the Israelites' enemies so they could take possession of the land.

This was a good thing.

However, God explained that they would have to settle the land **GRADUALLY**.

To the Israelites, the **THOUGHT OF WAITING** was discouraging.

Application: We often want solutions from God immediately. God cares that we grow, and so He often grows us little by little.

Illustration: A plentiful harvest

But often our **immediate solution** is like planting crops in January.

No matter how good our solution seems, if it is not the right timing, it will not benefit us in the long run.

Timing is important.

A GOOD THING AT THE WRONG TIME IS NO LONGER A GOOD THING.

In **Romans 8:28, the Bible teaches us that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him.**

This means that in the midst of our discontentment and impatience, we can trust God to work things out for our good, even when we don't understand **HIS TIMING.**

"God crumbles His mercies to us; we have His blessings by retail. So, the cloud empties not itself at a sudden burst, but dissolves upon the earth drop by drop." (Trapp)

(II) WHY 'LITTLE BY LITTLE?

Verse 29 – I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.

“I will not drive them out from before you in one year”- The Divine action is for the most part "slack, as men count slackness"—it is not hasty, spasmodic, precipitate, as human action is too often.

Men are impatient; God is strangely, wonderfully patient.

Why?

A) “Lest the land should become desolate”– There would be an insufficient population to keep down the weeds, till the land and maintain the big land. And an unkept land would become a desolate land or a wasteland.

E.g. # 1 – A “wastrel”[a wasteful and spendthrift person].

E.g. # 2 – Warren Buffet.

Proverbs 13:11- Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but he who gathers LITTLE BY LITTLE will increase it.

B) “Lest the beast of the field become too numerous for you” – When human population is lesser than the bigness of the land, wild beasts would multiply to become a danger to the new-comers.

E.g. # 1 - The kingdom of Samaria (Northern Kingdom) - (2 Kings 17:25).

E.g. # 2 - Post Franco-German war

E.g. # 3 – COVID global lockdown

Application: Figuratively and spiritually, this verse is warning us that when a blessing or a good thing comes to us too rapidly, **WILD BEASTS** will invade our heart.

Peter says “the devil, our adversary prowls like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

When prosperity or blessing comes to us too quickly, the devil prowls into our heart with pride, arrogance and lusts of all form.

C) "The Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily, that through them he might prove Israel, whether they would keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, or not" (Judges 2:21-23) –To test us

The Bible came together over many years from many inspired writers as God completed his revelation to man **little by little (Isaiah 28:10).**

LITTLE BY LITTLE IS OFTEN THE WAY OF THE LORD.

(III) WHAT ARE THE GOOD THINGS THAT COME TO US LITTLE BY LITTLE?

While bad things tend to happen swiftly and abruptly – like a car crash or a stock market crash – good things usually come about little by little.

What are the good things that come to us little by little?

• **THE LAND FROM GOD**

Land from God:

- **Literal land**
- **Ultimate heaven – the kingdom of heaven**
- **God's destiny for you on this earth**
- **Full potential**

So it was that God chose to push the Canaanites out of the land little by little.

This Promised Land only comes to them little by little.

And we read in our text of God's purpose in doing it this way:

Verse 29 – I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.

By having the Israelites replace the Canaanites only little by little, the wild animals were unable to invade those empty places that would have been left by lack of human habitation.

And by having the Israelites replace the Canaanites only little by little, God made it so that the Israelites wouldn't have to replant the grape vines or the olive trees or to rebuild crumbling houses.

God's plan for Israel was **gradual** also so that the Israelites would have time to **"increase and possess the land."**

They needed **TIME** to become a mighty nation so that they could defend the land they were conquering.

God could have had them conquer the land in one fell sweep, for nothing is impossible for God.

But there is a danger in too much success coming too quickly. The people might forget that they depend on God. They might begin to think too much of their own greatness. They might fall into the worship of foreign gods.

So, God gives the victory little by little. The land from God comes about little by little.

• THE FAITH FROM GOD

We are not to expect always a sudden victory over our enemies, over sin, or over our struggles in life.

The **gift of faith mentioned in **1 Corinthians 12:9** is a sudden surge of faith by the Holy Spirit to attempt something impossible through the supernatural power of God.**

But more often than not, God does not give us this sudden burst of faith in us through the charismatic gift called **GIFT OF FAITH.**

God gives us daily and living faith like a **MUSTARD SEED.**



MUSTARD SEED



FULL GROWN MUSTARD TREE

Like mustard seed, our faith starts off very **small and insignificant.**

But as we continue in our discipleship with Jesus, it starts to grow and grow until one day it becomes a big tree providing shade to others.

Christian faith grows little by little.

Never underestimate your church attendance every Sunday.

The Christian life is hard work.

While the spiritual awakening of the Holy Spirit (revival) is often immediate, there is no sudden ability to know everything of God's revelation.

We still must study and make God's word our passion.

And there is encouragement in working steadfastly little by little.

In living the Christian life, little by little we give testimony of our faith to our children and to our neighbors as we come each Sunday to Church.

And little by little, we see conversions.

Little by little the faith from God grows in us.

We should not be discouraged that either ourselves or our actions are small, for God often works through such ways.

And though we may be little people, He is strong and we can depend on the Lord.

E.g. *Struggle with victory over our flesh*

When will the process be complete?

Not until we leave this body.

Verse 30 – Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.

Until we have **INCREASED in our faith and knowledge in Christ, will we then be able to inherit the land by having victory over our flesh.**

Process is more important than the destination

Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion. It is a **DAILY PROCESS whereby we grow little by little to be more and more like Christ.**

• **THE PROMISES FROM GOD**

The people of Israel were to depend on the Lord on and His promises.

In our text we find that the conquest of Canaan is not a wish, but a **PROMISE. It will happen, because God has spoken.**

He says:

Verse 30 – Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.

Verse 31- And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.

Who will do this?

GOD WILL.

Again, and again He says "I will."

I will send my fear before you (verse 27).

And I will send hornets before you (verse 28).

I will drive them out from before you (verse 30).

And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand (verse 31).

This promise of the Promised Land goes back all the way to **Genesis 15:18-21 when God made a covenant with Abram saying, “**To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.**”**

And this promise, though now many years later, God did not forget.

God remembered His promise, rescued his people from Egypt and brought them to the promised land.

And in Jesus Christ, God remembered His promise.

In Christ, God said "I will."

Just as Israel was given success because of the work of God alone, so our salvation is because of the work of God alone. God has done it. His promise is fulfilled.

And as God promises Israel victory of the Canaanites, so He promises us victory over our sins little by little.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us little by little.

Whatever issue you are struggling with:

- **in your life**
- **in your home**
- **in your family**
- **in your mind**

....keep working as the Lord promises victory little by little.

But God, we cry, take away my pain now! Take away my sin completely and immediately!

But it is the Lord's will that is done, not our own.

And He has reasons in His plan for the **suffering we endure, that little by little –**

- **we may be drawn towards Him**
- **Finding our comfort in Him**
- **Depend on Him in all things**
- **Not depend on ourselves.**

We are to obey His voice as He calls us to battle sin.

While justification is a one-time act of God in the death of Jesus Christ, sanctification occurs over time— little by little.

Sanctification is a putting off of the old habits and a putting on of the new.

Replacing anger with patience.

Replacing self-conceit with a spirit of listening.

Replacing our former daily habits with times of prayer and reading of the word.

Little by little God sanctifies us through the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

A call to stay faithful in the little things and in all things.

It is a call to be faithful in:

- Church attendance**
- Giving**
- Bible reading**
- Prayer**
- Evangelism**
- Training up children**
- In work**
- In trust in God**

It is call to be stalwarts (steadfast person) for the faith.

A call to patiently work for the Lord.

Little by little does the discipline of a child bring about maturity.

And we can expect no less as we, in comparison to God, are like mere children absolutely needing His discipline.

Little by little, He promises that we will grow closer to Him, to be holy as He is holy, to one day be in the Promised Land of His eternal kingdom in heaven.

Little by little a person may hear the word of God in this place or in some other place.

But little by little God is working on them so that one day they suddenly are changed and they see the light and hear the word and come to Faith in Jesus Christ.

Christcentric Link

Matthew 13:31:“The kingdom of heaven, is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

The Jews expected Jesus to be their **instant Messiah, delivering them from the oppressive Roman rule.**

But the kingdom of heaven does not work this way. It is by the **"little by little principle".**

Our Lord Jesus came in like a **mustard seed, so small and insignificant. **He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him**" (Isaiah 53:2)**

Little by little Jesus grew up as a carpenter's son, increasing in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Little by little He preached the word of God, taught in the synagogue, healed the sick. Little by little He allowed God to develop him from an infant born in a manger to a Rabbi at the age of 30.

His promised deliverance to Israel is little by little. First comes the Old Testament, then John the Baptist to prepare the way, then His obscure life, then His public life and like a mustard seed, he fell to the ground by dying at the cross so that He could resurrect as the greatest of shrubs and becomes a Tree for all the birds of the air to come and make nests in its branches. Yes, from the smallest mustard seed to a Big Tree of Salvation for this age and the age to come.

Total promised deliverance will come for Israel after 6000 years and not now. That is the principle of God's kingdom, so that Israel, His elected nation will appreciate His ultimate deliverance and will grow to know Him one day.

The same for the church and the same for us. Our Jesus lived out the “little by little” kingdom principle in His revelation of Himself to the Jews and to the world(Isaiah 28:10). Had he come immediately after the fall of Adam in Garden of Eden, mankind would never have known what it is to have a Suffering Savior atoning for every area of our sinful life. Jesus waited for 4000 years to be over in Old Testament to appear in the New Testament. And now the church has to wait for another 2000 years for Him to appear in glory to us.

While we are in this church age, He purposely delays His Second Coming so that our faith can be solidified little by little, while we evangelize the world.

Today, if the Promised Land (God's destiny for you) is delayed; faith from God is developing so slowly and the promise of God seems slack, then **look at the cross. Jesus had to die a slow death at the cross. He could have asked His Father 12 legions of angels to come and deliver from the suffering at the cross but He did not. He underwent a slow death so that today He could impart grace to those who are struggling with **impatience and waiting**.**

No matter how slow His promise seems to be unfolding to you, remember, His death at the cross and resurrection have already made possible for all promises of God to you as "Amen! I will". The slow death at the cross, the descent to hell – this is the **PROCESS we all have to incarnate with Christ because after we have gone through this **PROCESS**, we shall inherit the land, faith and promises – our **resurrection**.**

To the degree you can see the forbearance of Christ in his dying moment by not calling down 12 legions of angels to deliver him, to that degree will you allow Christ to develop patience in you to wait, endure and to change..... little by little.

The slow process of conformity and transformation is more precious to God than instant change.

CONCLUSION

Let us therefore be encouraged to wait on the Lord.

Psa 37:7 ESV- Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

Psa 27:14 ESV- Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Indeed, wait on the Lord and you will not be disappointed, for His promises will be fulfilled, little by little until a little become a lot.

MY TESTIMONY

Psalms 59:11-13 (message) – Don't make quick work of them, God, lest my people forget. Bring them down in slow motion, take them apart piece by piece. Let all their mean-mouthed arrogance catch up with them, catch them out and bring them down – every muttered curse – every barefaced lie. Finish them off in fine style! Finish them off for good! Then all the world will see that God rules well in Jacob, everywhere that God's in charge.

