

The Problem of Envy

Joshua 17:14-18

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, March 3rd 2024

I. Introduction

J. I. Packer once said, “Envy is one of the most cancerous and soul-destroying vices there is.” Was that an exaggeration? No. I have quite a few counseling books that say the same thing. People don’t *recognize* the dangers of envy immediately, but when you see the *results* of this sin, it truly is astounding how dangerous the enemy of envy is.

Proverbs 27:4 describes envy as a powerful enemy, Job 5:2 describes it as a destructive force, and Proverbs 14:30 likens envy to rotteness in the bones. If it is an enemy, is destructive, and brings inward rotteness, we should avoid it like the plague. And yet, people will hold on to envy and nurse it as if it is an inalienable right - they have a right to feel this way.

And I hope by the end of the sermon you will recognize the disastrous consequences of not crucifying envy within us. Saul’s envy of David caused him to eventually try to *kill* David. Now, envy doesn’t usually result in murder, but it can result in bitterness, slander, complaining, grumbling, pride, and many other sins. And with regard to Saul, he probably didn’t *intend* to murder David initially. In fact, David was his friend. But because he did not crucify envy, it began to grow into a monster that *controlled* him. Envy makes us so focused on what we *want* that over time we become blinded to a number of sins that envy spawns within us. And we will see that it *does* spawn a lot of sins.

Rachel’s envy of her sister’s babies (when *she* had none) made her bitter against her sister and angry against her husband (Gen. 30:1). In Genesis 26:14 you see the Philistines envying Isaac’s wealth, and when they couldn’t have the wealth, they didn’t want Isaac to have it either, so they stopped up Isaac’s wells. That’s going one step beyond envy, isn’t it? Schlossberg calls that resentment. “If we can’t have it, he’s not going to have it either.” Joseph’s brothers envied him in Genesis 37:11 and that envy made them bitter against him and made them do awful things to him.

So envy is not a vice that we can ignore without damage to our souls. Commentators point out that the leaders of Manasseh clearly became envious of property that they didn’t have and God didn’t *want* them to have. And we will see that it was an *irrational* envy.

A. The Definition of envy

But let’s start with a definition. Miriam Webster’s dictionary defines envy this way: “Envy is resenting the advantage of another, with a desire to possess the same advantage.” Jon Courson adds a few details, saying,

Envy is the whimpering whisper within me which says, “Why him and not me? It’s not fair what he has, where he’s at, what he enjoys.” Envy is different than jealousy, for while jealousy fears that I’ll lose what I have, envy wants what someone else has — be it a personality trait or skill, a gift or position.¹

Clinton and Hawkins say,

Envy is fueled by the expectation of deserving more success and recognition than another person. Envy, therefore, is closely linked to pride and greed.²

II. Envy makes us blind to the blessings we have (v. 14)

With that as a background, let’s dive into the text. Verse 14 *should* come as a shock when one understands the magnificent properties that the descendants of Joseph had already gotten. Yes, there were a few areas that were rough, and even a little bit of desert. But between Ephraim and Manasseh, *they had already received far more property and far better property than any other group*. You can see that on the map. The territory of Ephraim and Manasseh is huge. But here’s the thing - envy can make us blind to the blessings we already have - so blind in this case that they can’t see that God has already been *extremely* generous with them. But to the person with envy, that doesn’t matter; they want more.

Lord Congelton in England overheard one of his servants saying, “If only I had five pounds, I would be perfectly content.” He wanted her to be content, so he gave her five pounds. But some time later he overheard her saying to herself, “Why didn’t I ask for ten pounds?” If you are not content with the providential lot that God has *already* given to you, it is unlikely you will *ever* be content. You can’t satisfy the monster of envy. You must crucify it.

Let me tell you a true story from when we worked with the International Studies Program at UNO. I was so intrigued by this story that I wrote it down in my illustration file. One of the teachers told me that he had given a writing assignment to the International Students in his class. The writing assignment was to answer the question, “What I would do if I had a million dollars?” For thirty minutes the class was quiet as people wrote down their dreams. It was a great exercise for practicing their English writing skills. Well, finally, one lady came up to the teacher’s desk, showed him two pages of crossed-out and written-over figures that she had been writing. She told him, “Not enough, teacher! I gotta have another hundred thousand!” And as I remember the story, she was serious. Apparently she wasn’t kidding. A million was not enough to satisfy *her* dreams. But of course, even if she had another million, it likely would not be enough.

¹ Jon Courson, *Jon Courson’s Application Commentary: Volume One: Genesis–Job* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 480.

² Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling: Personal and Emotional Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 110.

Envy blinds us to the blessings that we already have. Eve had a whole garden with enormous variety that was full of fruit trees that she could eat from, but Satan got her to envy fruit from the only tree that was forbidden. She was blinded by Satan to the incredible generosity of God. Rachel's envy of her sister's babies made her so focused on babies that she was blinded to all the other blessings that God had given to her and she wanted to die. That shows a degree of blindness.

A. They look for special favors from a clansman in power (v. 14a)

Verse 14 shows another area of blindness that envy can produce - they were so convinced that they needed more and better land that they weren't embarrassed in the least to ask Joshua to use his leadership position to give them more. This is asking him to show favoritism and really amounted to a form of graft. Graft is using political connections to get something others would not be able to get. Verse 14 says, "Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying..."

Last week we saw that Joshua was an Ephraimite, so he was related to these children of Joseph. They were trying to leverage their relationship to Joshua to profit from his leadership. "Surely a relative can use his position to give us more." Of course, Joshua was not subject to favoritism, so their request did not work. But the fact that they would even *try* to use their relationship to get their way is a sad testimony. It illustrates how blind people can become when envy grips their hearts.

B. The "sons of Joseph" already had the largest and most fertile territory (16:1-17:13)

Another illustration of the blindness that envy can produce is seen in the context of the *previous verses and* the previous chapter. Donald Madvig points out that the descendants of Joseph already had the largest and most fertile territory in all of Israel (with just a few rough places), yet they still complain that they haven't been given enough. He says,

In terms of square miles, the Joseph tribes had little reason to complain. Moreover, the land they were given was the most fertile in all Palestine. Joshua was certainly justified in resisting their request.³

But envy makes people so focused on what they *don't* have that they don't even notice that they are starting to drift into unethical territory - in this case the unethical issues being not just envy but asking for favoritism. James 3:16 speaks to the blindness of envy in brushing over ethical issues when it says this: "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." If you have been justifying *your* envy, keep that verse in mind. It says, "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." Confusion means that you are not going to be thinking straight. And that envy also breeds

³ Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 337-338.

“every evil thing!” This is why envy must be crucified early while our thinking is still clear. Envy is such a dangerous enemy.

C. They speak of “one lot” whereas God had already given them twelve (v. 14b with v. 5)

Another evidence of blindness was that their envy led to stretching the truth. They ask, ““Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit...?”” Joshua would no doubt have shaken his head at the audacity of this claim. It *is* audacious. Look at verses 5-6.

Ten shares fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side of the Jordan, because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons; and the rest of Manasseh’s sons had the land of Gilead.

So they had twelve shares in all. Either they engaged in an outright lie, or they were using a different definition of a share than Joshua had used in verse 5 - which would still be stretching the truth to benefit their position. It is still falsehood no matter *which* definition of the word “share” you might use. Commentators point out that even if you just looked at huge blocks of territory, there would be a minimum of three shares that they received - Manasseh East, Manasseh West, and Ephraim. Joseph’s children got all of that. But envy makes people so focused on what they *want and don’t yet have* that they are sometimes willing to bend the truth or even to tell an outright lie in order to get it. Now, they may not think it is a lie because we have already seen that envy breeds confusion. But whether you see this as a lie or bending the truth, it is sin.

Don’t be surprised when the envy in your children leads them bend the truth or tell lies. Envy produces all kinds of evil. It’s not enough to deal with the lying; you’ve got to deal with the *root* issue that produced the lying.

D. Their envy was really a complaint against a good God (“lot”)

The next aspect of blindness can be seen in the word “lot.” Proverbs 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.” So it wasn’t *Joshua* who gave them the land anyway; it was *God*. All Joshua did was cast the lots (like dice). They fell where they fell. And we have already seen that all the tribes got their land based on how the lot fell. It had *nothing* to do with Joshua’s decision.

Well, that means that their complaint was not just against Joshua. It was ultimately claiming that *God* had been unfair. And what’s weird about this is that if *any* tribes might have thought that they had been given an unfair share, it was certainly not the descendants of Joseph. Maybe Dan, or Zebulun, or Issachar might have felt shortchanged, but for Manasseh and Ephraim to think they were shortchanged shows incredible blindness to

God's good providence. And the Puritan writer, Stephen Charnock claims that all envy is a denial of providence.⁴ It's a complaint against God.

Do we act like the descendants of Joseph? Do we get bitter over God's Providences? Do we envy money as if we had a right to it? What about envying other people's houses, husbands, wives, children? If you ever experience envy creeping into your heart, instantly put it to death and begin thanking God for His mercies - mercies that none of us deserved anyway. Without such repentance, envy will just get worse. The envious person needs to learn from the apostle Paul, who said,

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (Phil. 4:11-12)

E. Envy exaggerates self-worth (v. 14c)

The next area of blindness that I see in these children of Joseph is an exaggerated sense of self-worth. They say, "since we are a great people..." They saw themselves as being great.

I hope by now you are beginning to appreciate the headaches Joshua experienced. One author said,

Sometimes we envy people in high position, but if we knew what they had to put up with in that position we would not envy them so much. So it was with Joshua. He had a heady position but some of the territory that went with the position was not so nice. Listening to and trying to solve the complaints of dissidents has never been an enviable task. Especially was it a pain in the neck to have to deal with. The problem of Ephraimites was that they thought they were better than they were.

And it is impossible to have envy without having this problem of thinking of yourself more highly than you ought to think. It is no wonder that the ancient church listed envy as one of the seven deadly sins.

F. Envy exaggerates what God thinks of us (v. 14d)

The next area of blindness is that they had an exaggerated view of what *God* thought of them. They not only thought highly of *themselves*, but they thought that *God* thought highly of them as well. They say, "Since we are a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now." In effect they were saying, "We believe God *wants* to bless us because *He* must recognize that we are a great people." It may seem like they were being spiritual when they acknowledged God's blessings, but is it really being spiritual when they thank

⁴ Stephen Charnock, in *Horn, Puritan Remembrancer*, 93 as quoted by Dale W. Smith, ed., *Ore from the Puritans' Mine: The Essential Collection of Puritan Quotations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020), 159.

God for the million dollars (so to speak) but complain that a million dollars isn't enough? No. And it's definitely a complaint against how the lots fell out. They believe they deserve *more* than God has given to them. They think to themselves, "It's not fair that I have x when that person has y."

III. Leaders should not be manipulated by the envy of others (v. 15)

So what is Joshua to do? If a leader's objective is always to keep everyone happy (which is impossible by the way), then a leader's only goal should be to give people what they want to hear. But that's *not* Biblical leadership. Real leaders like Joshua will *model* self-denial and will encourage others to have self-denial by learning to be content. Tom Landry said, "Leadership is getting someone to do what they don't want to do, [in order] to achieve what they want to achieve." In other words, leaders help people to achieve what their better self really wants to be by helping them to avoid the bad ways of doing so. Joshua was that way. So he didn't allow himself to be manipulated in verse 15.

A. Joshua didn't ignore their envy (v. 15a), though he knows he can't please everyone

The first good illustration of Joshua's leadership is that he didn't ignore their envy. He addressed it. Verse 15 begins, "So Joshua answered them..." He answered them; he didn't ignore them. He knew he couldn't please them, but he still addressed the issues head on. And this is the kind of leadership that will make some leaders very unpopular. It will make children upset with their parents. They might even say, "Don't you love me? You would give me what I want if you loved me." And you can respond, "No. *God* defines love, and it would not be in your best interests to reward your envy, so that would not be loving." Charles Spurgeon's comments on this chapter are right on point. He said,

It is not an easy task to divide land amongst different claimants. Joshua divided Canaan with strict impartiality. He was a man of God, and he was also shrewdly wise, as you may gather from many of his speeches. But, for all that, he could not satisfy everybody. He who would please all attempts the impossible. God himself is quarrelled with. If it be the design of providence to please men, it is a melancholy failure. Do we not find men everywhere dissatisfied with their portions? This man would like his lot if it were not where it is, and that man would be perfectly satisfied if he had a little more. One would be contented with what he has if he could keep it always, while another would be more pleased if life could be shortened. There is no pleasing men. We are like the sons of Joseph in the chapter before us, ready to complain of our inheritance. It should not be so... Contentment should be natural to those who are born of the Spirit of God; yea, we

ought to go beyond contentment, and cry, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits.”⁵

And I say, “Amen!”

B. Joshua showed how contradictory their statements were (v. 15b)

But then Joshua went on to show them how contradictory their statements really were. He’s already done this, but he persists in showing them the lack of logic in their arguments. But envy is more emotional than logical. In a moment we will see that they obviously weren’t convinced even though Joshua was pretty clear, but he still seeks to set the truth before them. You don’t stop using logical truth simply because people don’t follow it. This is God’s pattern - present the truth. God sanctifies people through the truth of His Word. So Joshua’s first step was showing them how contradictory their claim was. He says,

“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.”

In effect Joshua is using their own arguments against them. If you are as numerous as you say you are, then it should be easy for you to clear the forests that you’ve already been given and to conquer the land that you have been given, but which you haven’t yet conquered. After all, you have just said that you have a numerical advantage. Of course, this was not what they wanted to hear, as verse 16 shows.

But to people who have an exaggerated sense of self-importance and self-worth, take them at their word and give them great tasks to do. Joshua was saying, “Show your greatness in your performance.” As one pastor said, they “need to match their talk with their walk.”

C. Joshua pointed them to their responsibilities before God rather than letting them stay in their pipe-dream (v. 15c)

The next thing Joshua did in verse 15 was to point them to their *responsibilities* before God rather than *avoiding* responsibilities by living in a pipe dream. Their responsibilities were to *conquer* the land and to *take dominion* of the land. And they were doing neither. They feared the giants, so they were avoiding them, and apparently they were overwhelmed with the work of clearing the forests that had been given to them because that was a lot of work and it would take a lot of time. So they were not taking dominion of the territory that had already been given to them. They were wishing for territory that was easier. Envy does this; it tends to want the easy way; it avoids responsibilities.

But as an encouraging side-note I should point out that eventually Joshua’s words must have had a good impact on them. And the reason I believe these words were not lost on them is because archaeology shows some impressive improvements that they eventually

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, “Retrospect—“The Lord Hath Blessed.,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 61.

made to the mountain and desert portions of the land (which, by the way, were not that huge). And to me this is encouraging because it shows that blindness *can* be overcome by the Holy Spirit applying the truth of God's Word. Don't give up in bringing the truth of God's Word into your children's lives. *We* can't change people's hearts, but *God* certainly can, and He loves to use the truth of His Word. Now, that is simply a side-note. *We don't* see that *here* in this passage, but eventually they did what Joshua told them to do. His speech worked. The ESV Study Bible says on this passage,

With the influx of the Israelites into Canaan, many settlements appear in areas never before settled: the highlands and the deserts. To support this human settlement in those areas not so easily cultivable, the Israelites borrowed or developed fresh agricultural techniques. One principal development of settlers in the mountains was agricultural terracing. In addition, plastered cisterns and rock-lined silos are abundant at these sites; they are rare in earlier periods.⁶

Granted, most of the land was lush. But they did have some areas that needed this kind of creativity. So to me that shows that Joshua's counsel eventually had an impact.

But let's get back to the text. At this juncture, they are still resistant. Don't be surprised when the monster of envy is not *instantly* conquered. God can use the ministry of the Word to change people's hearts, but don't get discouraged when that change doesn't immediately happen. Don't give up.

IV. Envy makes more excuses (v. 16)

Anyway, if you look at verse 16 you will see that they still have their excuses. Let's break down their new excuses phrase by phrase.

A. It makes them nag (v. 16a)

First, their envy makes them nag. "But the children of Joseph said..." Joshua's previous answer should have been totally sufficient as an answer if they had been humble, but no, they keep pressuring him. One counseling book that I have shows the gradually increasing stages of envy when envy is allowed to flourish unchecked. It starts with comparison, moves to scorn and disdain of those he or she envies, moves on to malice, and then domination of relationships. On the domination portion of the cycle what they say about a woman applies to a man as well. They say,

[An] envious woman is usually desperate to be in control, so she seeks to dominate every relationship in her life. Some women who have faced abuse or abandonment in their past bring this pathology into their marriage, becoming

⁶ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 421.

domineering, nagging, and suspicious toward their husband, rather than loving and respecting him.⁷

But that is in effect what these leaders of the house of Joseph were doing. They were not taking a “No” for an answer. They kept pressuring Joshua. Maybe they think he will cave in if they keep pressuring him. Nagging doesn’t have to be drawn out in order to be nagging. It is simply continuing the same arguments (and they really are the same arguments) and not taking “No” for an answer. And you parents should not allow nagging to make you give in to your children’s envy. Failure to do so is not thinking about your children’s long-term best interests.

B. Their excuse bypasses their responsibility and asks for something easier (v. 16b)

So let’s quickly go through some of the ways they continued to pile excuse upon excuse. Each one of these excuses expresses an effort to bypass their responsibility and instead to ask for something easier to be handed to them on a silver platter.

1. This isn’t enough

First, they say that what they have isn’t enough. Well, they’ve already said that. They say, “The mountain country is not enough for us...” Joshua had told them to clear some forest land and settle there. That would solve the problem. But without even having cleared the land, they are still convinced that it won’t be enough. If you thought that desire for entitlement programs was a new thing, this reminds us that it is endemic to any society that has envy. By the way, we live in a country *filled* with envy. Gary North uses the phrase “the politics of envy” in a number of his books. The “politics of envy” is just a nickname for socialism. That is what *all* forms of socialism are - the desire to leverage the power of politics to get what we envy. And when envy is that pervasive, it is destructive to a country.

2. It’s impossible

Their next excuse is that their task is impossible because of the Canaanites and their heavy iron chariots. OK, this seems like somewhat of a legitimate excuse on the surface. They say,

and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both those who are of Beth Shean and its towns and those who are of the Valley of Jezreel.

This was probably the *main* reason why they wanted different land. It wasn’t that the land was too small. It was that the land was occupied by people who had really scary war vehicles that were terrifying.

⁷ Tim Clinton and Diane Langberg, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 132. By the way, I’m not saying that I like their counseling books, but this was a valid insight.

And by the way, archaeologists believe that this use of heavy iron chariots was a fairly new development in Canaan, and that Israel itself didn't start to use them till the time of Solomon (1Ki 9:22; 1Ki 10:26–29). So it *was indeed* scary technology. The records we have of a line of heavy iron chariots charging into an army would indeed have been very intimidating.

But that should have been their *first and only* honest excuse - *that they didn't have the faith to fight the Canaanites*. But that excuse wouldn't sound too spiritual, would it? They leave out their own culpability of lacking faith.

So in one sense they are sounding *exactly* like the 10 spies forty years before who felt like they were grasshoppers compared to the Canaanites. And God was not pleased with the lack of faith back then. No wonder Joshua was not moved with these excuses. Their eyes were on the fearful chariots rather than on the Omnipotent Lord of Israel's armies who had promised to give them success *if they would do their duty by faith*. They were failing to live by faith rather than by sight (as 2 Cor. 5:7 words it). Fear drowned out faith. And their *envy* drowned out faith. Envy is not compatible with faith. Hopefully you are getting the picture that you need to deal with envy in your children very early on before it becomes an established pattern.

V. Joshua persists in pointing them to their responsibilities before God (vv. 17-18)

In any case, Joshua persists in pointing them to their responsibilities before God.

A. He didn't ignore their excuses (v. 17a)

We once again see in verse 17 that he didn't ignore their excuses. Verse 17 says, "And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph..." And we too should not ignore envy in our families. Don't assume that your children will outgrow envy. Children *don't* outgrow *any* sin. They must be disciplined over sin, trained in righteousness, coached to have faith, and constantly pointed to God and His Word. It's the only way to help others to successfully mature. Otherwise, envy just becomes worse and worse over time if it is not dealt with.

And a lot of envy flows out of an overemphasis on our rights. So I will just say as another side-note that we have no rights in the absolute sense of the term or God could not take them away. The right to life is bounded by God's Word, which calls for the death penalty for a murderer. Well, that means that the right to life is not an absolute right. It is bounded by God's Word. And if we ignore the bounds of God's Word when we pursue rights, we are not pleasing to God. The right to have children is often bounded by God's providence. And it is important that we keep pointing our families back to the sufficiency of God's grace to take us through *everything* God throws at us.

B. He uses their own excuses to show that they didn't have a case (v. 17b)

Once again he used their own excuses to show that they didn't have a case. Verse 17 says, "You are a great people and have great power..." In effect he was saying, "Put your money where your mouth is." If you are as great as you claim you are, then you have everything that you need to clear the forest area and to conquer the valleys where the Canaanites are. And in any case, your greatness comes from God. So go back to God and *trust in God as you use your greatness*.

C. He shows how faithless their excuse was (v. 17c-18a)

And then he again shows how much their excuses lacked faith and substance. They asked for more than one lot, and Joshua in effect replies: "Sure. *Possess* your shares. You've already got more than one share. You've been given twelve shares. *Possess* them. Take the hill country that so far you have done nothing to possess, and take the Canaanites that you have so far not engaged with. Do you want more territory? It's right there in front of you. You've got far more than one share. Just possess your possessions." Beginning with the last phrase in verse 17:

...you shall not have only one lot, but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it is wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong."

William MacDonald comments on the first phrase in his commentary. He says,

When Joshua said, "You shall not have only one lot" (v. 17b), he didn't mean that they would get additional land but that they must occupy all the land that had been given to them.⁸

In other words, Joshua didn't budge one inch on what they were envious of, but he kept pressing them to the responsibilities that they had been shirking. And envy always makes us wish for something on a silver platter rather than working diligently for it.

D. He calls upon them to possess what God has already given (v. 18b)

Next, in verse 18 he calls upon them to possess what God has already given to them.

...but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it is wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours...

It would have been hard work to cut down the forest, to terrace the slopes, and to turn wild country into arable land. But God calls all of us to hard work. Laziness will never please

⁸ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 252.

God. If you have lazy children, you need to diligently teach them to have a godly work ethic. A godly work ethic is one of the essential traits to habituate in our children as we train them. John Butler said,

It is the complaint that wants recognition but not responsibility. They wanted privilege but not the requirements that went with the privilege. They wanted greatness but did not want to put out a great effort to achieve it. They wanted a pay increase but did not show much interest in a production increase. Their kind is not extinct but still plagues society and the church. This shows up at school in those who think they should be on the team who do not qualify because their performance is deficient and in those who think they should get better grades but do not qualify because their test scores do not even justify the grade they are given.⁹

So God's solution was simple old fashioned work. That is an essential component of getting rid of covetousness and envy. Work hard for your money and work hard to acquire the things needed to take dominion.

But Joshua was also strategic. He was helping them to break their task down a step at a time. He told them to cut down the forest *first*, and that would put them into a better strategic position to conquer the Canaanites in the valley. They could come down on the Canaanite chariots from above, and the chariots would not be able to chase them up into the mountain territory. So he did *at least* give them an idea on how they could do what they were convinced they could *not* do. He didn't just rebuke them; he counseled through to success. Now, people don't always follow good counsel, but that's another issue.

E. He reminds them that God never commands something that He doesn't equip them to achieve (v. 18c)

The last thing he reminds them about is that with God, nothing is impossible. Indeed, God never commands something that He doesn't equip us to achieve. So verse 18 ends by saying,

...for you *shall* drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong.

There is no doubt in Joshua's mind. You *shall* do it. Envy tends to make people shirk responsibilities and come up with excuses, but we can encourage our children to put off envy by promising them that God will give them all the strength that is needed to do the things that God has commanded them to do.

May we as a congregation put off envy and begin walking more and more into the lifestyle attitude in 2 Corinthians 9:8, where Paul promises this:

⁹ John G. Butler, *Sermon Starters, vol. 4* (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2014), 35.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Believe that promise as you determine to fight against the enemy of envy. Amen.