

LIVING "JUST OUTSIDE" OF CANAAN

(HOW TO STOP SHORT OF GOD'S INTENTION)

Numbers 32:1-15



THE CHOICE OF REUBEN AND GAD

- ◆ The Reluctance to Proceed
- ◆ The Request to Stay
- ◆ The Response of Moses
- ◆ The Reward of Compromise

"Wherefore, said they, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and **bring us not over Jordan**. And Moses said unto Gad and Reuben, shall your brethren go to war, and shall you sit here?" (V. 5, 6)

Bill Kirk

“LIVING JUST OUTSIDE OF CANAAN”

(Stopping Short of God’s Intention For Your Life)

Numbers 32:1-15

“Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan. And Moses said unto the children of God and to the children of Reuben, shall your brethren go to war, and shall you sit here?” (V. 5, 6)

INTRODUCTION

1. Numbers 32 was written by Moses.
2. It was written in the plains of Moab.
3. It was written just before Israel’s entrance into Canaan.
 - ◆ Genesis is the book of beginnings in the garden.
 - ◆ Exodus is the book of redemption from Egypt.
 - ◆ Leviticus is the book of worship with purity.
 - ◆ Numbers is the book of walking in the wilderness.
 - Refusing to enter Canaan at Kadesh-barnea.
 - Refusing to believe God to take care of the giants.
 - Refusing to follow Joshua and Caleb and believe God.

In Numbers 32 There Is A Startling Question

Fact: It is a request of the children of Reuben and of Gad.

Fact: It is a request that startled Moses and agitated his heart.

Fact: It is a request that we can make if we are not careful.

Fact: It is a request placed in Scripture to open our eyes.

What is the Request?

Chapter 32:5

“If we have found grace in thy sight Moses, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, **and bring us not over Jordan.**”

And Moses Responded:

“Shall your brethren go to war, and shall you sit here?” (V. 6)

Sit Where?

- ◆ On The **east** side of Jordan!
- ◆ On the **border** of God’s blessing!
- ◆ On the **edge** close to Canaan!
- ◆ On the **verge** of the Promise Land!

- ◆ God had said, "I have something better planned for you."
- ◆ God had said, "Go westward and cross over Jordan."
- ◆ God had said, "Leave your walking in this wilderness."
- ◆ God had said, "Sever your ties in the land of Jazer."
- ◆ God had said, "I have an inheritance you know not of."

But Reuben and Gad Said:

"Don't take us over Jordan, we'll live just outside of Canaan on the east side."

In Other Words

"We've conquered the sin of wanting to go backwards to the land of Egypt, but we don't want to go forward over Jordan into Canaan."

"Just leave us here in the land of Jazer and let us compromise between Egypt and Canaan."

And Moses Was Stunned With This Request.

1. Because 38 years prior to this request, there was a similar request at Kadeshbarnea.
2. Because the previous request caused Israel to forfeit 40 years of time in the wilderness.
3. Because a whole generation was lost due to unbelief.

Five Sad Words:

"Bring us not over Jordan." (V. 5)

Questions with Answers

1. Why were Reuben and Gad hesitant to cross over?
2. Why were two tribes reluctant to go in?
3. Why were Reuben and Gad willing to stay "just outside" of Canaan?
4. Why did the enemy want to separate the tribes?
5. What is the temptation to just "live on the edge" today?
6. What is the payment for failing to cross over and go all the way with God?
7. Why was Moses so upset with this request, and what difference does it make in my life today?

I. The Reluctance To Proceed

Question: How did Reuben and Gad get comfortable on the east side of Jordan?

Question: Why did they want to stay still, instead of move on?

A Few Reasons

1. They had a multitude of cattle (and lots of stuff to go with it).
2. The land of Jazer in Gilead was a land of feed and fertility to provide for the cattle.

3. It would take lots of effort to transport their flocks over Jordan.
4. It was "comfortable" and "secure" and "soft" and "easy" to say no to progress.

What A Sad Commentary

- ◆ Willing to live "just outside" of Canaan.
- ◆ Willing to live close to the edge of blessing.
- ◆ Willing to camp and settle in, when God said "go".
- ◆ Willing to settle for "second best" and "stop short".

What A Danger To Think:

- ◆ "We've travelled far enough."
- ◆ "We'll play it safe for now."
- ◆ "We'll indulge in the fertile land of Jazer."
- ◆ "We'll take no risk to cross over."

In Other Words

They were willing for a moment to live "just outside" of the Promise Land. (Repeat)

II. The Request To Stay

Reuben and Gad's Two Requests:

1. "Let this land be given unto thy servants." (V. 5)

Question: What land?

Answer: The land of Jazer and Gilead where they were.

Question: What happens when we feel we've arrived and that we've experienced all that God want to do?

Answer: We will pray the request that Reuben and Gad prayed:

2. "Bring us not over Jordan." (V. 5)

Question: Why did the two tribes request to stay on the wrong side of Jordan?

Question: Why were they willing to stop in the middle (between two worlds)?

Fact: Jazer and Gilead were not a part of Canaan proper.

Fact: Jazer and Gilead were the outlying and perimeter lands of Canaan.

Fact: Jazer and Gilead were inferior to what God had promised.

But in Canaan There Was So Much More

1. God had attached His promises to the land beyond Jordan (not on the outside edge).

2. The ark of God (Ark of the Covenant) was going across Jordan into Canaan.
3. The ark meant that God's glory and presence would be on the other side of where they were.
4. The power of God would be manifested in Canaan for those who crossed over.
5. The enemy could never defeat Israel as long as Israel went totally over to the west side of Jordan.
6. The request to compromise was a slap in the face to God, saying that God wasn't able to give them all that He had promised.
7. The request to stay was a rebuke to God, saying that God was not able to remove and cast out every enemy stronghold in Canaan.

In Other Words

- ◆ Reuben and Gad had conquered a portion of enemy territory,
- ◆ But didn't believe that God would complete the entire job or total possession of the Promise Land.

Results?

- ◆ "We'll be willing to live "just outside" of the glory and presence and victory and provision in the Promise Land."

What's the Application?

1. Too many people are willing to live "just outside" of Canaan.
2. Too many people are willing to settle for "second best":
 - ◆ Living "just outside" of the perfect will of God.
 - ◆ Living "just outside" of a good prayer life.
 - ◆ Living "just outside" of Pentecostal power.
 - ◆ Living "just outside" of death to sinful habits.

In Other Words

"We don't drink and get drunk like we used to, but we don't live fully in Canaan because we still drink (in moderation on the holidays)."

"We don't smoke three packs a day like we used to, but we haven't given it up completely (down to just 10 cigarettes a day)."

"We're not baptized in the Holy Spirit, but we're not opposed to those who are (we come every Sunday to observe and look on)."

"We pray enough to keep from falling into sin, but not enough to be labeled a red-eyed, hot-blooded radical prayer warrior."

"We love to come to church once a week and feel great when we do, but can't quite take the step to seek God earnestly evenings (we live "just outside" of Canaan)."

What is God Saying Here?

1. Break with everything questionable in your life.
2. Refuse to stay on the edge any longer.
3. Ditch the non-essentials.
4. Narrow your interests.
5. Leave every hindering relationship behind.
6. Get specific with God (do what you know you need to do.)
7. Purpose to live an overcoming life, by refusing to go half way to Canaan.

III. The Response of Moses

“Shall your brethren go to war, and shall you sit here?” (V. 6)

Question: What happens when we live “just outside” of Canaan?

Question: What happens when we live “on the edge” instead of going the way of absolute obedience?

Three Things

1. We **discourage** those around us. (V. 7, 9)
 - ◆ The other tribes were waiting for Reuben and Gad to inherit better land.
2. We **detour** those around us. (V. 13)
 - ◆ My life will either pull people forward or pull people backward.
3. We **destroy** those around us. (V.15)

Ask: How does living on the edge play into the enemy's hand?

All Read Joshua 22:10-12

- ◆ The tribes “just outside” of Canaan brought division to Israel.
- ◆ So much so, that when the land was fully conquered, Reuben and Gad had to put up an altar to let the people know that “we belong to Israel”.
- ◆ Had they crossed over Jordan earlier and claimed their inheritance, everybody would have known their citizenship.

Question: Does everyone know where you live?

Question: Does everyone know where you belong?

Question: Does everyone know where you reside?

IV. The Reward of Compromise

“And the king of Assyria carried away Reuben and Gad.” (I Chronicles 5:26)

Fact: Reuben and Gad lived just outside of Canaan.

Fact: Because of living on the edge “just outside”, they were exposed to enemy powers.

Fact: Because of this, they were the first to be taken captive by the king of Assyria.

In Other Words

- ◆ Sin we fail to conquer, will conquer us.
- ◆ Flesh we fail to subdue, will subdue us.
- ◆ Habits we fail to break, will break us.
- ◆ Enemies we fail to address, will address us.
- ◆ Attitudes we fail to crucify, will crucify us.

Yes:

- ◆ Yes, Reuben and Gad did eventually cross over Jordan.
- ◆ Yes, Reuben and Gad made it over in time.
- ◆ Yes, Reuben and Gad moved on after hesitation.

But Quick Response is God’s Intention

The Appeal

1. What is keeping you “just outside” of Canaan?
2. What hinders you from “crossing over” Jordan?
3. What is God dealing with you about at this time?
4. What is preventing you from God’s ultimate for your life?

Amen!
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