

Enter at Your Own Rest

Studies in the Book of Joshua

"Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it"

Alan Redpath

Text

Joshua 1:10-18

Topic

After commanding the nine and one half tribes to prepare for conquest Joshua reminds the two and one half tribes of their commitment to fight and then listens as they offer him counsel

Title

"The Tribe Has Spoken"

Joshua 1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,
Joshua 1:11 "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.' "
Joshua 1:12 And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying,
Joshua 1:13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.'
Joshua 1:14 Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them,
Joshua 1:15 until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He *gave* you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise."
Joshua 1:16 So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.
Joshua 1:17 Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses.

Joshua 1:18 Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

Introduction

The Donner party is the name given to a group of settlers, including the families of George Donner and his brother Jacob, who became trapped in the Sierra Nevada mountains during the winter of 1846-47. Nearly half of the party died and some resorted to eating their dead in an effort to survive. The experience has become legendary as the most spectacular episode in the record of Western migration.

The party reached the base of the steep summit they needed to cross on October 31st just as snow was beginning to fall. Although some in the group were able to reach the summit they were forced to turn back as there was no way the whole party could get through. Heavy snow continued falling overnight and by morning the pass was completely blocked by snowdrifts over twenty feet high.

Here is the historic kicker: they had come two thousand five hundred miles in seven months only to lose their race with the weather by **one day**.

It's a rather tragic illustration of settlers falling short of their goal.

Our text in Joshua introduces us to a group of settlers who fell short of their goal. They are the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

The incident is recorded in Numbers thirty-two. At the border of the Promised Land at the Jordan River these two and one half tribes asked Moses for permission to settle down short of the Promised Land.

Moses was initially furious and rebuked them. They pressed him. They swore to help the rest of the tribes conquer the Promised Land when the time came. But they would prefer to settle on the east side

of the Jordan rather than in the land God was giving them. Moses relented to their compromise.

Fast-forward to our text. The time had come for these tribes to keep their word and fight with their brothers. They will; but it remains a tragic story. No matter that Moses gave them permission to settle, they settled short of God's best for them. Their settling short would later nearly spark a civil war in Israel. And it left them vulnerable to their enemies, resulting eventually in their being the first to be conquered by the invading Assyrian army.

Why did they do it? If you read the story in Numbers thirty-two you'll see it was because they had great possessions, especially livestock, and were looking at the land only in terms of its earthly comfort.

There is one potent lesson for us as Christians in their story: **It is all too possible to settle short of God's best for us.**

The land the nine and one half tribes was going in to conquer is twice called the place the Lord was giving them and twice called a place of rest. The land the two and one half tribes settled is called the land Moses gave you. They were settling short of God's promises, short of God's rest.

Since none of us sets out to settle short we want to understand how to overcome the lure of comfort and convenience so we can continue to conquer all the spiritual territory God has given us.

If we contrast the nine and one half tribes and the two and one half tribes we will start to get a handle on things.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Set Your Mind To Please God And You Will Only Settle For The Best, and #2 Set Your Mind On Ease And You Will Always Settle For Second Best.

#1 Set Your Mind To Please (God)
And You Will Only Settle For The Best
(v10-11)

Our studies in Joshua will be most meaningful if you see the experiences of the twelve tribes of Israel as illustrations given for our learning. They were called upon to conquer the territories granted them by God. *So are we!* In our case the 'territory' isn't a physical geography; it is a spiritual one. Our 'territories' are all the various aspects of our lives: marriage, family, church, employment, and anything and everything we think, do, or say. Spiritual success is promised to us if we will tread forward by faith and overcome the opponents and obstacles in those territories.

Joshua readies the people for action:

Joshua 1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, **Joshua 1:11** "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.' "

The nine and one half tribes were the first to be addressed. It tells us that when your mind is set on pleasing God you will be where you need to be to hear from God.

It doesn't mean you must attend every church service, every Bible study, every Christian event. It does mean that you should prefer to be where you can hear God's Word taught and where you can worship your Savior with your brothers and sisters. There are always things competing for your time. Some of them are good things – or at least they are not necessarily bad in and of themselves. But they may not be the best things for you or for your family if you are serious about conquering spiritual territory.

The lack of a recorded response by the **officers** is telling, especially when contrasted with the lengthy response of the two and one half tribes. It tells us that they received the word and immediately acted upon it – no questions asked, no comments offered. It wasn't really the word of Joshua. This was God's command.

A mind set on pleasing God is always eagerly awaiting His next command.

Preparation was necessary. It always is! It pleases God when you and I spend as much time as we can preparing for conquest. If, for example, one of your territories is a ministry, then spend time praying, studying, reading, and reflecting upon it.

Joshua gave them a time table. **Within three days** was not very long. It suggests a sense of urgency.

Since we believe the Lord Jesus could return imminently we have an even greater sense of urgency. All we have is today.

Finally we see that they were told to **possess** what God was **giving** them to **possess**. It was a reminder that victory was assured but they must press forward to claim it. It would not come automatically or easily.

If we are to conquer deeper into each of our territories we must desire to please God above all else. There will be times when it will be easier to stop short and be comfortable. At those times we need to look past the opponents and obstacles and press forward simply because it brings pleasure to God.

While the nine and one half tribes were preparing Joshua had a meeting with the two and one half tribes.

#2 Set Your Mind On Ease
And You Will Always Settle For Second Best
(v12-18)

It might be helpful if I recite a portion of Moses' response to their request to settle short.

Numbers 32:6 And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben: "Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?"

Numbers 32:7 Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has given them?

Numbers 32:8 Thus your fathers did when I sent them away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land.

Numbers 32:9 For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them.

Numbers 32:10 So the LORD's anger was aroused on that day, and He swore an oath, saying,

Numbers 32:11 'Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me,

Numbers 32:12 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.'

Numbers 32:13 So the LORD's anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone.

Numbers 32:14 And look! You have risen in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel.

Numbers 32:15 For if you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people."

Wow! Pretty tough talk. Still they persisted and offered Moses a compromise. Let us settle short, they said, and we promises to help fight when the time comes.

The fact Moses agreed doesn't make it right that they settled short. It wasn't God's will for them. It would have disastrous consequences later on:

1. Because they would be far from the place of national worship they end up constructing a monument that almost sparks a civil war.
2. Later in their history we see that, because they are cut-off from their brothers by the Jordan River they become easy prey for their enemies. They are the first swept away by the Assyrian army.

God's permission for you to do something doesn't mean it is His best for you. The apostle Paul applies this principle to decisions we make in the area of Christian liberty. He points out that though I might be allowed to do something it may not be the most spiritual or the most expedient thing for me.

In the case of these tribes their mind was set on ease. The account in Numbers makes it clear that they had much possessions. At some point they began to think in terms of ease and comfort rather than endurance and conquest.

Let's see what we can learn from them.

Joshua 1:12 And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying,

Joshua 1:13 "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.'

Joshua 1:14 Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them,

Joshua 1:15 until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He *gave* you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

Contrast this with Joshua's approach to the nine and one half tribes. First of all, in verses ten and eleven he spoke only to the officers who then spoke to the tribes. Here Joshua is forced to address all the people in the two and one half tribes.

It alerts us to the fact that these folks had an independent spirit when it came to obeying God through their leaders. I know that spiritual leaders can abuse their position. But when they are not abusing their position, when they are simply leading, then it is godly to follow their lead.

Second we see that Joshua has to take them through the entire episode with Moses in order to make his point. That tells me these folks are always looking for the loophole. They make commitments but all of them are really conditioned upon circumstances not faithfulness.

Third, they need everything spelled-out precisely. They are not flexible. They are only going to do the minimum and maybe not even that much.

They respond:

Joshua 1:16 So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.

Joshua 1:17 Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses.

Joshua 1:18 Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

Sounds good! It isn't as good as it sounds. For one thing, Joshua reminded them of their commitment to send **all** their fighting men. Although they say, **all that you command us we will do**, in subsequent passages we will learn that they only sent an elite fighting force. The vast majority of their fighting men stayed behind to protect their much possessions and families.

Then they say, **just as we heeded Moses**. This is what you might call audacity! I read you the passage from Numbers. Did they heed Moses? *No!* They argued with him until he accepted their compromise.

- being changed to bring change -

If you were Joshua, would you be excited to know that they would heed you just like they heeded Moses? No; of course not. It is to Joshua's credit that he continued to strive with these guys.

Then they said, **only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses**. Sound OK to you? It has just a hint within it of an escape clause. They promised Moses, not Joshua. As long as they agreed amongst themselves Joshua was as worthy a leader as Moses they would follow him. It's almost as if they were waiting for him to slip-up so they could stay or go home.

Joshua 1:18 Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

Keep this in context. They had just asserted that they would fully follow Joshua. This statement is not about themselves. It is about their brothers. It is about the nine and one half tribes. It is at best a critical and judgmental comment. It assumes an air of superiority over their brothers.

Often a mind set on ease will develop an air of superiority. You settle for God's second best but it gives you time and opportunity to have the world's best. It's too easy to think that having this world's goods are an indicator God is pleased with you.

God is pleased with you when you live to please Him. He wants you to conquer more and more spiritual territory, not grow at ease in the world.

A study in contrasts gives each of us opportunity to see which group we are more like – both as individuals and as a fellowship.

If there are any ways that we are like the two and one half tribes then we need to immediately change our mindset.

And we can't look at our lives in terms of which we are more like most of the time. Rather we should think of each territory we're called upon to possess by conquest. In some we are more like the nine and one half tribes. In those we are more like the two and one half we must commit to change.