

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
3-9-22
Numbers 32

The Request To Settle On The East Side Of The Jordan River – Verses 1-5

¹ The Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large herds and flocks, saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were suitable for livestock. ² So they came to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the community, and said, ³“Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo and Beon— ⁴ the land the LORD subdued before the people of Israel—are suitable for livestock, and your servants have livestock. ⁵ If we have found favor in your eyes,” they said, “let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan.”

32:1 Three tribes (Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) wanted to live east of the Jordan River (sometimes referred to as the Transjordan area) on land they had already conquered. Moses immediately assumed they had selfish motives and were trying to avoid helping the others fight for the land across the river. But Moses jumped to the wrong conclusion. In dealing with people, we must find out all the facts before making up our minds. We shouldn't automatically assume that their motives are wrong, even if their plans sound suspicious.

Moses Reacts To The Request Of The Tribes Of Reuben And Gad – Verses 6-7

⁶ Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, “Should your fellow Israelites go to war while you sit here? ⁷ Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over into the land the LORD has given them?”

32:6-7 Why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has given them? Moses feared that the attitude of the tribes of Reuben and Gad would keep the other tribes from going into the Promised Land. Their attitude said, "We've fought enough and suffered enough already. Let's just settle down where we're at." Moses' fear had a foundation. If you want to press on with the things of the LORD and go deeper and further with Him, there is a sure way to discourage that desire - start hanging around believers who are content with where they are, and who don't want to press on with the LORD. Complacency is contagious.

32:6-7. Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here? Moses wanted them to know that there was a battle to fight and that they were all in it together. Just because these tribes were content with where they were at did not relieve them of the responsibility to keep the battle going.

Moses Fears They Are Following In The Footsteps Of The Previous Generation Of Unbelief, The Generation Which Perished In The Wilderness – Verses 8-15

⁸ This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to look over the land. ⁹ After they went up to the Valley of Eshkol and viewed the land, they discouraged the Israelites from entering the land the LORD had given them. ¹⁰ The LORD's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath: ¹¹ ‘Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of those who were twenty years old or more when they came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob— ¹² not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the LORD wholeheartedly.’ ¹³ The LORD's anger burned

against Israel and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone. ¹⁴“And here you are, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the LORD even more angry with Israel. ¹⁵If you turn away from following him, he will again leave all this people in the wilderness, and you will be the cause of their destruction.”

32:8-9 They discouraged the heart of the children of Israel: Moses reminded the leaders of the tribe of Reuben and Gad why Israel failed to enter the Promised Land some 38 years before. It is a terrible thing to be used of the devil to discourage other believers to walking deeper and further with the LORD. We should ask God to guard us from ever discouraging the heart of another child of God.

32:11 Because they have not wholly followed Me: This is why the discouragement of the ten unfaithful spies work on the men of that generation. If they had wholly followed the LORD, the discouraging report would not have unduly influenced them. What made Joshua and Caleb different was that they wholly followed the LORD. They did not bend to the discouraging report of the ten unfaithful spies. When we have not wholly followed the LORD, we are much more likely to be influenced by the carnal and the discouraging around us.

32:14-15 If you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness: Perhaps this generation figured they had a free ticket to the Promised Land, no matter what, because the "dues" had already been paid by the generation of unbelief. No way! They can perish just like the previous generation if they walk in the same unbelief!

32:14-15 Moses perhaps felt that the tribes of Reuben or Gad made a bad choice for themselves; that is, they hurt themselves by settling on the lands east of the Jordan River. But Moses did not confront them with that issue. If a child of God is content to settle for less in their Christian life, there is little or nothing one can do. But when their complacency begins to affect their brothers and sisters, it must be confronted. This was the basis of Moses' confrontation.

The Tribal Leaders Of Reuben And Gad Offer To Send Their Troops To Help Conquer The Land West Of The Jordan River – Verses 16-19

¹⁶ Then they came up to him and said, “We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children. ¹⁷ But we will arm ourselves for battle and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our women and children will live in fortified cities, for protection from the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁸ We will not return to our homes until each of the Israelites has received their inheritance. ¹⁹ We will not receive any inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan, because our inheritance has come to us on the east side of the Jordan.”

32:16 A simple pen for livestock had four roughly built stone walls, high enough to keep wild animals out. Sometimes the top of the wall was lined with thorns to further discourage predators and thieves. The pen's single entrance made it easier for a shepherd to guard his flock. Often several shepherds used a single pen and took turns guarding the entrance. Mingling the animals was no problem since each flock responded readily to its own shepherd's voice. The three tribes who chose to remain east of the Jordan River wanted to build pens to protect their flocks and cities to protect their families before the men crossed the river to help the rest of the tribes conquer the Promised Land.

32:16-19 The land on the east side of the Jordan had been conquered. The hard work was done by all of the tribes together. But the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh did not stop after their land was cleared. They promised to keep working with the others until everyone's land was

conquered. After others have helped you, do you make excuses to escape helping them? Finish the whole job, even those parts that may not benefit you directly.

Moses Receives Their Offer - Providing They Fulfill It – Verses 20-24

20 Then Moses said to them, “If you will do this—if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for battle ²¹ and if all of you who are armed cross over the Jordan before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out before him— ²² then when the land is subdued before the LORD, you may return and be free from your obligation to the LORD and to Israel. And this land will be your possession before the LORD. ²³ “But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out. ²⁴ Build cities for your women and children, and pens for your flocks, but do what you have promised.”

32:20-24 If you do this thing: If they do as they said, then they would be blameless before the LORD and before Israel. But if they did not, they would surely be guilty. But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out: And if they failed to do as they said, they could be sure that your sin will find you out. While it is true that any sin may find us out, the sin specifically spoken of here is the sin of doing nothing!

The Tribal Leaders Of Reuben And Gad Agree – Verses 25-27

25 The Gadites and Reubenites said to Moses, “We your servants will do as our lord commands. ²⁶ Our children and wives, our flocks and herds will remain here in the cities of Gilead. ²⁷ But your servants, every man who is armed for battle, will cross over to fight before the LORD, just as our lord says.”

32:25-27 Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth: In answer to Moses speech, the Gadites and Reubenites agree to all of the terms Moses set down, including their wives and children staying with their flocks in the land of Gilead, while the men go to war.

The Agreement Is Settled, And Cities Are Given To The Tribes Settling On The Lands East Of The Jordan River – Verses 28-42

28 Then Moses gave orders about them to Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun and to the family heads of the Israelite tribes. ²⁹ He said to them, “If the Gadites and Reubenites, every man armed for battle, cross over the Jordan with you before the LORD, then when the land is subdued before you, you must give them the land of Gilead as their possession. ³⁰ But if they do not cross over with you armed, they must accept their possession with you in Canaan.” ³¹ The Gadites and Reubenites answered, “Your servants will do what the LORD has said. ³² We will cross over before the LORD into Canaan armed, but the property we inherit will be on this side of the Jordan.” ³³ Then Moses gave to the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan—the whole land with its cities and the territory around them. ³⁴ The Gadites built up Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, ³⁵ Atroth Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, ³⁶ Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran as fortified cities, and built pens for their flocks. ³⁷ And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh and Kiriathaim, ³⁸ as well as Nebo and Baal Meon (these names were changed) and Sibmah. They gave names to the cities they rebuilt. ³⁹ The descendants of Makir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, captured it and drove out the Amorites who were there. ⁴⁰ So Moses gave Gilead to the Makirites, the descendants of Manasseh, and they settled there. ⁴¹ Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, captured their settlements and called them Havvoth Jair. ⁴² And Nobah captured Kenath and its surrounding settlements and called it Nobah after himself.

32:33 So Moses gave to the children of Gad, to the children of Reuben, and to half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph: Numbers 32:33 introduces another tribe - actually, half the tribe of Manasseh - who were likewise content to settle on the lands east of the Jordan River. So, in total, two and one-half tribes never took possession of land west of the Jordan River.