

## The Right Side of the Jordan

Numbers 32:1-25

March 15, 2009

### Intro

We now see Israel preparing to enter into the land that God promised them, the land of Palestine. At this point, they are camped on the eastern side of the Jordan River, just north of the Dead Sea.

The context of the verses we are studying today is that while the sons of Israel are camped on the eastern side of the Jordan two of the tribes decide that it's not so bad there. They have a lot of cattle and other livestock and could see that the land was good for grazing, and that was enough for them.

The problem was that God had not brought them through 40 years in the wilderness to camp just outside of his promises. But the land on the eastern side of the Jordan was already conquered. The Amorites and the people of Bashan had come against Israel in unprovoked attacks and so the tribes of Reuben and Gad saw that they could have this land without any further blood, sweat, or tears. In other words, life would be much easier for them if they did not cross over the Jordan to land of promise.

There are many spiritual lessons for us from the story. Many people live just outside of the fullness of God's promises. They do not press into deeper things spiritually. They become spiritually content with less than God's best.

You can imagine Moses' amazement at this request. He would have given anything to cross over the Jordan River, but he can't. Here, these two tribes can, but they won't.

### **I. Cross Over into Deeper Spiritual Things**

- 1 The tribes of Reuben and Gad made a logical business decision. They had lots of cattle and other livestock in the land on the east side of the Jordan was good for grazing. It seemed simple and straightforward.
- 2 But the problem was that it was less than what God had intended for them. They aren't just anybody, they are God's people and He brought them out of Egypt for the purpose of giving them the fullness of His blessing and His promises.

#### A. There is no revival on cruise control

- 3 The problem was that Reuben and Gad didn't want the effort of crossing over and facing the giants they knew were in there.
- 1 They didn't want to have the clear the rocks from the fields, to clear the trees and

the brush, to carve out the vineyards and orchards to experience the abundance of God's best.

- 2 The problem was that that land was cleared of enemies because the whole nation fought the Amorites and the people of Bashan, but now Reuben and Gad want to let others do the work of the battle while they just sit.

**Illus – in other words, they want to take their foot off the gas and just let cruise control take over. They're done; they reached as far as they wanted to go.**

**But there is no revival there. If someone stops throwing in coal, it's not noticed right away.**

- 3 Later, if Israel would have asked for help, they could just say, "We're busy raising our cattle, we don't have time to help."

**Philippians 2:12-13, So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**

**Proverbs 13:4, The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the soul of the diligent is made fat.**

**Illus – I remember when I was young and single and had lots of time on my hands. I knew life would get busier and so I wanted to learn and gain all that I could.**

- 4 The scriptures give us great encouragement to pursue deeper spiritual things.

**1 Corinthians 15:58, Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.**

B. Our faith affects others

- 5 Moses responded to the request of Reuben and Gad with a strong correction. "Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here?"
- 6 Then he showed them to how their decision would affect those around them, "Why are you discouraging the sons of Israel?"
- 7 Then he reminds them of what their fathers did when the 12 spies discouraged the faith of the whole nation. Imagine the discouragement if two entire tribes decide to not enter in?

**Illus – Imagine what was going through the mind of Moses, *I'm not spending another forty years in the wilderness with these people!***

8 Caleb and Joshua followed the Lord *fully*!

**App – If you become spiritually defeated, you affect those around you the same way. If you become spiritually on fire, that will also affect those around you.**

**Illus – CH Spurgeon once was asked why so many people were coming to his church, “I am on fire for God. And when I preach, they come to watch me burn.”**

**Illus – Imagine spiritually what others have done before us to allow us to have the freedom that we have in Christ today; those who suffered for Christ, who translated God’s Word, who carried it throughout the world, and who died in the process.**

**May it be said of us that we didn’t drop the ball. This is our generation. What will we do for those who follow after us?**

**2 Timothy 4:6-7, For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;**

**Galatians 3:3, Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

**Illus – Don’t wait for someone else to lead spiritually.**

C. Cattle turn into pigs

9 After Moses’ strong challenge, the tribes of Reuben and Gad came back with a compromise to their proposal. What if they would build some fortified cities on the eastern side of the Jordan to keep their children safe and send the fighting men over to help in the battles to come?

10 Moses permitted this compromise, but we have to go far into the future to see how this compromise worked out.

11 They wanted this area because it was good for livestock and at first they raised cattle and sheep. But by the time Jesus was ministering in that area, they were raising pigs, which is against the laws that God had given them as a nation.

**Mark 5: 1-18 They asked Jesus to depart, he asked Jesus to be near.**

1 Compromise will always be costly at some point. The fruit of it is seen when we come to the point of not wanting Jesus near.

2 How much better the heart of the sons of Korah that we see in Psalm 84.

**Psalm 84: 1-5 My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord.**

## II. Our Sin Will Find Us Out

- 1 Moses wouldn't be around to hold them to their promise and so gave them a solemn warning that has become a great piece of wisdom for all ages.
- 2 Our sin will find us out. He even said, "Be sure of this" --be certain of this truth -- "your sin will find you out."
- 3 They say that only two things in life are certain, death and taxes, but it seems to me that there other things that are certain as well.

**Illus – We used to live in a house where all the pipes affected the others and it never failed that just when you want to take a shower everyone else runs to the bathroom.**

**Illus – Moses knew something of sin finding him out. When he saw the distress of his brothers in Egypt he beat an Egyptian and killed him and he tried to hide him in the sand, but it was known the very next day.**

### A. There is a sin of doing nothing

- 1 When Moses said that their sin would find them out, he was referring to the sin of doing nothing.
- 2 Reuben and Gad committed to helping their brothers even as their brothers had helped them and Moses was holding them to their promise.

**James 4:17, Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.**

- 3 What does it take for evil to prevail? For good men to do nothing.

### B. Sin will find us in our conscience

- 4 First, there is no such thing as a secret sin. God always knows and if we could live in the light of that knowledge, it would truly change us.

**Hebrews 4:13, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.**

- 5 If we run from our sin, it runs after us.

**Illus – Joseph’s brothers thought immediately of what they had done to their brother 17 Joseph years earlier when things started going badly in their lives!**

- 6 David also knew something about running from sin and having that sin catch up to him.

**Psalm 32:3-4, When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;**

- 1 It finds us out because we are sowing to the flesh and from the flesh we also reap.

**Galatians 6:7-8, Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.**

C. God is faithful and just to forgive

- 7 The issue at hand is running from our sin. We must know for certain that it will run after us and will eventually catch up to us.
- 8 But what if we do not run from it at all, what if we take hold of it and bring it to the foot of the cross and ask Jesus to wash it by the blood of Jesus Christ?

**1 John 1:8-9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

- 9 He is the one who restores our soul. He is also the one who makes all things new.

**2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.**

**Illus – There is a powerful illustration of this in the Old Testament where God says that Israel was spiritually unfaithful and compares her to an adulteress. But later, as God is restoring Israel, he says of her, “O virgin daughter of Israel.”**

**Proverbs 28:13, He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.**