

February 28, 2010

THE CALAMITY OF BEING A CARNAL CHRISTIAN  
NUMBERS 32:1-7; 16-23

Some people choose to live on the border of God's blessings. They make their decisions on the basis of material gain and not on spiritual blessings. The two and a half tribes did not claim their inheritance in Canaan, even though they were close to it. These tribes brought division to Israel.

"Do not take us over the Jordan!" (v.5) is as much an expression of failure as "Take us back to Egypt!" or "Let us die in the wilderness." When material gain, not the glory of God, governs our decisions, we will make the wrong decisions.

- I. THE SINFUL DECISION (vs. 1-5). The phrase "bring us not over Jordan," showed contempt for the land of promise and inheritance.
  - A. This was a decision of selfishness. The promised land of Canaan is not a type of heaven, because they had to fight for it. Canaan is a type of the Spirit-led and controlled life of the believer. We have to fight against the attacks of Satan, the world system, and our old carnal nature.
  - B. This was a decision of slackness. It was not for the common good of Israel to divide the people. The spiritual problem is that some people don't want what God has for them. In this case it was the Promised Land. They went in the wrong direction like Lot did towards Sodom. For us it is His will, His Word, and His worship.
- II. THE SHAMEFUL DISCOURAGEMENT (vs. 6-7). "Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?" "Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them."
  - A. Notice the problem of discouragement. Ten tribes were going into the land to fight for it and claim it. Two tribes apparently were not going to do their part. "Let someone else do it." In the church some are willing to work and others are willing to let them. Some are willing to attend faithfully and others are willing to let them.

God's people are discouraged by the self-complacent indifference to spiritual growth by carnal Christians. By your spiritual growth, do you encourage or discourage others? By your attendance, you encourage your Sunday school teacher and pastor. By your chronic absenteeism you discourage.
  - B. Notice the penalty of discouragement. Unfaithful Christians are still wandering in a spiritual wilderness. Joy, peace, and spiritual satisfaction

come from obedience to God. Would God say that you encourage others by your faithful service? Would God say that you discourage others by your unfaithful service? The answer to both questions is a resounding yes.

### III. THE SUBSEQUENT DANGER (vs. 16-23).

- A. There is danger in the substitution of God's will for our will. Who knows best – you or God? They decided to live outside their inheritance. They substituted God's best for something far less.

John 10:10 states, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." You receive life when you are saved. The abundant life is a blessing of faithfully following Jesus daily. Jesus gave His best for you on the cross.

- B. There is danger in the settling for great wickedness (v.23). "Be sure your sin will find you out." We reap what we sow. You get what you give.

The land Ruben and Gad chose was the most exposed to their enemies. Their position gave rise to misunderstandings between them and the other tribes of Israel. Their close association with heathen neighbors led them into idolatry. They were the first to go into Assyrian captivity.

What kind of Christian are you?

A lot of Christians are like wheelbarrows – not good unless pushed.

Some are like canoes – they need to be paddled.

Some are like kites – if you don't keep a string on them, they fly away.

Some are like a football – you can't tell which way they will bounce next.

Some are like balloons – full of wind and ready to blow up.

Some are like trailers – they have to be pulled.

Some are like lights – they keep going on and off.

And then there are those who always seek to let the Holy Spirit lead them.

The question we need to ask - what kind of church would this church be if every member were just like me?

