

The Consequences of Not Walking by Faith

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[0 : 00] Christ's holy precious name. Amen. Amen. Alright, this morning, if you've got your Bibles, please turn to Numbers chapter 32. Numbers 32.

And let's read through this to get started here. It says, And Shabam and Nebo and beyond.

And the Lord's anger was kindled 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 consumed. And behold, ye are risen up in your father's stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord toward Israel.

For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness, and ye shall destroy all this people. And they came near unto him and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones.

[2 : 50] But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place. And our little ones shall dwell on the fenced cities, and our little ones shall dwell on the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance. For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan or forward, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.

And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, and will go all of you armed over Jordan before the Lord, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, and the land be subdued before the Lord, then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel.

And this land shall be your possession before the Lord. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out. Build you cities for your little ones, and fold for your sheep, and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth.

And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my Lord commandeth. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle shall be there in the cities of Gilead.

[4 : 08] But thy servants will pass over every man armed for war before the Lord to battle, as my Lord saith. So concerning them, Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief of fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel.

And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass over with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle before the Lord, and the land shall be subdued before them, then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession.

But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the Lord hath said unto thy servants, so will we do.

We will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side, Jordan, may be ours. And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto the half-tribe of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, the kingdoms of Sion, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan, the land, where the cities thereof in the coast, even the cities of the country round about.

The book of Numbers is a book of lists. And by virtue of this, it's also a book of numbers, as its title suggests, but that's not something that we're going to focus on this morning.

[5 : 41] And like Exodus in places, and Chronicles in places, it can be a dry book, but it is terrain that we must travel in our journey through the Bible.

And as is all scripture, it is of much profit to us. Oftentimes, in the most unlikely places, we find things which are of great value to our spiritual lives.

Amen. This book is also a book of murmuring and complaining, very much like the modern American today. It's a book of many failures.

It's a book of much resultant death. And one of the great lessons of this book is that we suffer when we walk by sight instead of faith.

And not only ourselves, but oftentimes others can and will suffer as well when we walk by sight instead of faith. Because of the evil report of the spies who went to search out the land of Canaan to see what sort of land it was and the fear they placed in the hearts of their brethren because of the giants in the land and their lack of faith in the Lord God to deliver them the land which he had promised them.

[6 : 59] Not only did 10 of those 12 spies lose their lives, but as a consequence of their walking by sight and not faith, over 600,000 Israelite men lost their lives and the congregation of Israel was forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years while that sentence was carried out.

2 Corinthians 5.7 says, for we walk by faith, not by sight. As Bible believers, this is our calling. This is our lot in life. This is the Lord's will for our lives as has been communicated to us through the Apostle Paul. This morning, I want to consider some of the consequences of not doing so.

Numbers 32, verses 1-5 says, Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cow. And when they saw the land of Jazar and the land of Gilead, that behold, the place was a place for cattle, the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses and to Eliezer the priests and unto the princes of the congregation, saying Adaroth and Dubon and Jazar and Nimrod and Heshbon and Leila and Shabam and Nebo and Beon, even the country which the Lord smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle.

And thy servants have cattle. Wherefore said they, If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for possession and bring us not over Jordan. One of the things that walking by sight rather than faith does is it distorts our perception and our perspectives.

[8 : 48] And it interferes with our ability to discern God's will for our lives. It makes us temporal people rather than heavenly minded. It makes us selfish people rather than service minded.

The children of Reuben and the children of Gad approached Moses and they said, Look, we have cattle. In fact, we have a lot of cattle. And this land looks like a land that's great for cattle. So clearly, this is no coincidence.

Let us stay here. And just as a quick aside, the Bible teaches us that the Jews require a sign. But we don't.

And we shouldn't be looking for a sign to discern the will of God for our lives. We don't need a second filling of the Holy Spirit. We don't need a vision from heaven. We don't operate by superstition or astrology or tarot cards or tea leaves.

What we need to discern the will of God is right here. Amen. You know, and I know that in my own life I've been victim many times of looking at circumstances and thinking that certain things just seem so obvious to me that this must be God's will.

[10 : 05] But the reality is is that God doesn't always work according to our logic. You know, he works in mysterious ways. Hence, we walk by faith and not by sight.

So never mind that this wasn't the promised land, God told Abraham that he would give to his seed all the land of Canaan as a possession.

His promise was to bring the children of Israel to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey. And the land east of Jordan, the land that they stood in at that time was not that land.

All throughout the book of Deuteronomy which was written on the doorstep of the promised land, Moses referred to the land over Jordan as that good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And make no mistake, the land that Reuben and Gad settled for was not the promised land. When Moses disobeyed God by striking the rock rather than talking to it, God told Moses that as a consequence of his not sanctifying the Lord in the eyes of Israel, he would not be able to enter into the land with the children of Israel.

[11 : 13] And when Reuben and Gad and Moses had this conversation, they most certainly were not in that good land which God had promised Abraham.

They may have been within eyesight of it, but they were most definitely not in it. Reuben and Gad had settled for a lesser land.

And when we walk by sight and not faith, because of our distorted perception and perspective, we also end up settling for much less than what God had intended for us. Reuben and Gad thought that they would be able to earn a better living there in that land.

They'd be able to provide a better life for their wives and for their children. Stephen, in his great discourse in Acts chapter 7, refers to the children of Israel as the church in the wilderness.

And that church in the wilderness continues to exist today. All we, you and I, who are in Christ, have been made members of that spiritual body of Christ, of that great mystery which is the church.

[12:26] Many of our brothers and sisters today, walking by sight and not faith, continue to use their wives and their children and their livelihood as an excuse to depart from the congregation, content to settle for something less than that good land.

They leave the church that God placed them in in search of better children's programs, in search of softer preaching, in search of a more agreeable place for their wife, or a more comfortable place to raise their family, in search of a place with better access to their hobbies and interests, and as Jeremiah wrote, in search of peace, peace, when there is no peace.

Now, we certainly don't need to rush headlong into trouble. In this world, we will have trouble. We don't need to go looking for it. As Christians, though, it is one of our birthrights, and our only escape from it is either death or the rapture.

So if our aim in this life is the pursuit of pleasure and security or to safeguard ourselves from all trouble, there is a great likelihood that somewhere along the line we have departed from a life of faith and are now being governed by sight.

As we mentioned earlier, the land of Canaan is often described as a land flowing with milk and honey. And the word of God is referred to in type in the scriptures as both milk and honey.

[14:03] And in Joshua chapter 8, we read that Joshua took stones and he wrote upon them a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel. This law was written in that good land which the Lord had given the Israelites to go in and possess west of the Jordan.

As far as we know, there was no like copy of it written in the land which Reuben and Gad chose to possess east of the Jordan. In fact, we also find that Moses erected an altar on the west of Jordan. But we never hear of an altar being found in the land east of Jordan. So when we, like Reuben and Gad, walk by sight and not faith, we sever ourselves from the words of God.

And Jesus very clearly tells us in Luke 4, 4, emphasizing that very thing that Moses himself instructed the church in the wilderness, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

And how are we ever to walk by faith and not to discern the will of God without his words? Never once do we read that Reuben and Gad sought out the will of God.

[15:16] We do read that they sought permission from Moses and Eleazar who were God's representatives, but we never read that they entreated the Lord God himself beforehand.

And that's so like man today who is so quick to run to other men for counsel rather than to invest time on his knees beseeching the Lord or to fill himself with the milk and honey in every good word of God.

Take a minute. Reuben and Gad saw the land. They saw their own cattle and they quickly drew the conclusion that that land must be their destiny. And going forward, we must, or we read repeatedly that that land of their possession is almost always referred to as the land that Moses gave to Reuben and Gad.

Whereas the land west of Jordan which the remaining tribes were soon to possess was the land that God gave to the children of Israel. How much sweeter are those things which we receive from the hand of God than those things which we obtain by our own presumptuousness.

You know, in Genesis 47, 1 through 3, it says, Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh and said, My father and my brethren and their flocks and their herds and all that they have are come out of Canaan and behold, they are in the land of Goshen.

[16:44] And he took some of his brethren and even five men and presented them unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers.

All the children of Israel were shepherds. They all had cattle. They all had herds. And yet somehow only Reuben and Gad drew the conclusion that that land was for them.

Only Reuben and Gad came up with the idea that it was their lot to remain behind east of Jordan.

Could it be in this passage that we are witnessing the first church split?

A church split that was motivated by selfishness, by short-sightedness, by walking by sight and not by faith. 1 Corinthians 6:12 says, All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Reuben and Gad were brought under the power of appealing pasture land.

[18:04] And maybe, just maybe, there was a more insidious reason for their desire to remain on the east of Jordan. Maybe they were also motivated by an element of fearfulness. Maybe they just weren't up for the task which lay ahead on the west of Jordan.

Maybe they were looking for a way to excuse themselves from the way of warfare that awaited their brethren. And there's many a Christian who is perfectly content to let his brothers and sisters wrestle on their knees and to let others pass out tracts and preach on street corners, to let others give support of missions, to let others show up on Wednesday nights and Monday nights and Tuesday nights and Thursday nights and Friday nights and Saturday nights.

When the doors of the church are open and we have a preacher here, we need to be here. It's not just for a few. It's for all of us. 1 Corinthians 10, 23 through 24 says, All things are lawful for me.

Reiterating what Paul said in chapter 6, But all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

And here's that word expedient again. Expedient means proper under the circumstances, profitable, serving to promote or advance the well-being of others.

[19:39] And as we shall soon see, this so-called lawful act on the part of Reuben and Gad was definitely not in the best interest of their brethren. In verses 6 through 15, we read, And Moses said unto the children of Gad, unto the children of Reuben, 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. Thus did your fathers when I sent them from Kadesh, Barnea, to see the land.

For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel that they should not go into the land which the Lord had given them. This is very telling what Moses says here actually in verse 15.

For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness, and ye shall destroy all this people.

He said, If you remain behind east of Jordan, he didn't say that they were going to destroy themselves.

[21:02] He says that if you remain behind, you will destroy your brothers and sisters. It will be you that will bring them down. Moses' concern here is for the children of Israel and how they will respond to the decision of Reuben and Gad to remain on the east of Jordan.

He puts Reuben and Gad in remembrance of what had happened 40 years earlier at Kadesh, Barnea, and warns them that their actions run the risk of discouraging the hearts of the children of Israel. One of the great consequences of our walking by sight and not faith is that we weaken our brothers and sisters in Christ.

our actions run the risk of discouraging and disheartening others. When Israel went to war, their captains were to go throughout the house and ask if any had recently been married or were engaged or if any had recently bought a new home or planted a vineyard or olive yard and then he sent them home.

But before that was done, the captains were to separate from themselves all those who were fearful and send them home. Why? Because their fear was contagious and they ran the risk of discouraging their fellow soldiers.

When we walk by sight and not faith, we weaken our brothers. We weaken those who are looking to us to be an example. And whether we wish to be an example or not, the fact remains that people are watching us.

[22:34] And we weaken their resolve in the midst of trials within their own lives when we walk by sight and not faith. We weaken their confidence in the pure words of God which are perfectly preserved for us in this book.

You know, the Gentiles are people who are consumed with this world, with this earth, with the now. And we in this room, we're no longer Jew or Gentile.

We're a part of the body of Christ and we're supposed to be a heavenly minded people, not weighed down by the cares and concerns of this world. Now evidently, Moses and Reuben and Gad came to a compromise as we see in verses 16 through 19 where it says, And they came near unto him and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle and cities for our little ones, but we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel until we have brought them unto their place.

And our little ones shall dwell on the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return unto our houses until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.

So Moses and Reuben and Gad come to a compromise whereby they would build sheepfolds for their cattle and cities for their wives and little ones and they themselves would pass over with their brethren ready armed until the other tribes had secured their inheritance on the other side of Jordan.

[24 : 04] But come now to verse 28. It says, So concerning them, Moses commanded Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel.

And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass over with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle before the Lord and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for possession.

But if you will not pass over with you, if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered saying, As the Lord hath said unto thy servants, so will we do.

We will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan that the possession of our inheritance on this side, Jordan, may be ours. And Moses gave unto them, even unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben and unto the half-tribe of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sion, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan.

It appears that the actions of Reuben and Gad had had an impact on Manasseh. And it looks like Reuben and Gad's decisions to stay east of Jordan had somehow influenced Manasseh.

[25 : 36] And they had become a stumbling block to their brothers. So then not only had their actions, the actions of Reuben and Gad, caused a split in the congregation of the children of Israel, but now they had also split a tribe.

And in splitting the family of Manasseh, they had further weakened their brethren. For now, they'd only be nine and a half tribes west of Jordan.

And it's no wonder when we look into the future that they were never fully able to rid themselves of all their foes in the land of Canaan.

Because whereby they should have been twelve tribes over there fighting in the land, they're only nine and a half. And this seemingly innocent desire to raise cattle in a land suitable for cattle had now left the congregation of the children of Israel just a little bit more vulnerable.

So don't ever lose sight of the fact that our actions affect one another. Our seemingly insignificant actions, those things that we can seemingly justify in any number of ways, can have adverse consequences to those who are looking for an excuse.

[26 : 55] turn now to Romans chapter 14 verse 12. Romans 14 chapter verse 12.

So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.

Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let us not, let not then your good be evil spoken of. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink and cattle, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another.

[28 : 33] For meat, for cattle, for pasture land, destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense.

It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is made weak. Hast thou faith?

Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat because he eateth not of faith.

For whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Walking by sight can lead to much sin in our lives and be a stumbling block to our brothers and sisters.

In closing, I want to consider one last thing. Look with me at verses 16 through 19 in Numbers chapter 32. 16 through 19.

[29 : 55] It says, And they came near unto him and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle and cities for our little ones. But we ourselves will go ready arm before the children of Israel until we have brought them unto their place.

And our little ones shall dwell on the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land. we will not return unto our houses until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance. This is Reuben and Gad speaking here and they say, For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan or forward because our inheritance has fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.

How mistaken were Reuben and Gad Romans 11 29 says, For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

God's promise to Abraham was that the Jews would inherit the land of Canaan west of Jordan. Reuben and Gad may have thought otherwise but as we see in the book of Ezekiel one day in the future Reuben and Gad will have their inheritance right next to their brethren in the land that God had always intended for them to have.

Reuben's inheritance will be right in between Ephraim and Judah and Gad's will be just below Zebulun on the southern border of the millennial kingdom and Manasseh will once again be one tribe and the reminder for us is that the kingdom of heaven is not our inheritance.

[31 : 41] This world those things which we see with our eyes it's not for us it isn't for today and it won't be in the future. This earth belongs to the Jew and one day soon all that will be sorted out but until then we need to remind ourselves that this world is not our home we're just passing through all our treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue we're just sojourners in this land walking by faith not by sight for now we see through a glass darkly but then face to face now I know in part but then shall I know even as also I am known my encouragement would be to walk by faith not by sight and it's hard because this world presents so many distractions and our heart is ever deceitful always willing to confuse matters in our own minds but our lot again is a life of faith and not sight and one day soon our sight will become reality until then though like I say just continue to walk by faith not by sight all right we have a little extra time this morning so we'll take a break now for about 15 minutes soon but when I fall

I fall into 18 maybe I don't go