

It's Close Enough

Taken from Numbers 32

Foundation

Stop and pray. Use this time to allow God to examine your heart.

Ask Him to give you courage not to settle for anything less than his perfect plan for your life.



Do you know people who like to "play it safe"?

First the Amorites had been defeated, then the Midianites. What victories God was giving the nation of Israel as it continued on its journey toward the Promised Land! In preparation for entering the land, a census had been taken to number the people, and a new leader was chosen. Joshua would be the captain, and Moses would be laid to rest, just as God had said. Having brought the Israelites up to the land, Moses would not be bringing them through it. He knew his days were coming to a close, and there was much to accomplish between now and then.

"Moses!" a group of men called, pulling Moses' thoughts to the present. He looked over and saw men from the tribes of Reuben and Gad approaching. These two tribes ranked ninth and tenth in size, but were blessed with successful herds and flocks. "The land we conquered from the Moabites and the Midianites is perfect for our flocks," they stated. "If

you please, we would like to have this land as our portion. Don't make us continue across the Jordan River into the Promised Land," they pleaded.

Moses, as well as Eleazar and the other Israelite leaders fell silent at the shock of the request. It was Moses who finally spoke up.

"Is it fair that your countrymen risk their lives, conquering the new land while you stay here?" he challenged. *Did we come this far only to have you refuse to enter*

the land the Lord has promised to give us? Moses thought. Isn't this the same type of rebellion that happened forty years ago?

The census wasn't just "counting heads"; it was much-needed information. It not only measured Israel's military strength, but also helped determine how the Promised Land would be divided—since land was given according to the size of the tribe. It also provided accurate genealogical records.

Moses cleared his throat and spoke his mind. "Why are you even suggesting the Israelites not continue to the place the Lord has set aside for them? This is the very mistake your fathers made! After viewing the land, they convinced the other Israelites they should not enter it, and God's anger burned. As a result, no man twenty years or older who escaped from Egypt would be allowed to enter the Promised Land. No one, that is, except Caleb and Joshua—for they were the only ones who trusted God. Because of this great sin, the Lord caused us to wander in the desert for forty years—until every last person of the generation who had disobeyed the Lord had died."

Moses paused, allowing his words to have their full effect. "Now, here you stand before me, Eleazar the priest, and all the community leaders—standing exactly as your fathers did—further igniting the Lord's anger against Israel. If

you refuse to follow where He leads," Moses cautioned, "The nation will again wander in the desert until they die, but this time their destruction will be your fault!"

With those words, silence fell upon the group. They could see the Jordan River and the land on the other side, full of unknowns and uncertainties. They also knew the land on this side of the Jordan was perfect for their needs. Their hearts were torn as they wrestled with the issues before them. In no way did they want to rebel against God or cause harm to fall upon their fellow Israelites.

“We would like to build pens on this side of the Jordan for our herds and flocks and towns for the women and children, but we are prepared to cross the Jordan with you to do battle until all the other tribes have taken possession of their land. We won’t return here until that is done, but while we’re gone, our women and children can live in walled cities and be protected from any enemies in the land. For the land here on the east side of the Jordan is the land of our inheritance,” the Reubenites and Gadites responded.

Moses looked at them thoughtfully. He knew God’s perfect will was to bring the *entire* nation of Israel into the land of Canaan. This was God’s purpose and plan. It was also a promise given to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He looked solemnly into each of the faces before him and gave them permission with a condition.

“If you will do as you promise, taking up arms before the Lord, crossing the Jordan to do battle, and staying with your fellow Israelites until they have claimed their portion of the land and all the enemies have been driven out—then you may return here and possess this land as your own. Your obligations toward the Lord and your fellow Israelites will be completed. If you do not live up to your end of the bargain however, this will be a sin against the Lord,” Moses warned. “And you will be punished for your sin.”

The Reubenites and Gadites responded to Moses’ challenge. “We will do just as the Lord commands. We will cross over into Canaan ready for battle, but our inheritance will be on this side of the Jordan where we currently stand.”

Footwork

In your Bible, turn to Numbers 32:16-17. It may seem like a generous offer the Reubenites and Gadites are making, but look again more closely. In verse 16, what do they plan to do? Now compare that to verse 17. Does it seem they want to help the cause, but may not totally identify with it?

Fruit

Trust is a hard thing, for it often demands we step out of our comfort zones and away from the play-it-safe mode. God has a perfect plan, and we need to trust Him that it is just that—perfect. Unfortunately, we are often all too willing to settle for second best. We come as close as we can to following God’s will while still trying to keep our foot on the other side of the Jordan—just to be sure. This only sets us up for future struggles, something the Reubenites and Gadites later discovered. What keeps you from following the Lord wholeheartedly? What compromises do you come up with? Take a moment to think about it. On a slip of paper, write down what God brings to your mind. Then, across the top of the paper, write: “This is the Jordan I must cross.” Give it to God in prayer, and ask Him to help you look up (to Him for strength) and move out. Don’t settle for “close enough,” for it will eventually pull your heart far from Him.