

“Sending the Two and One Half Tribes Home”

Joshua 22:1-9

INTRO:

Home is where the heart is. Certainly, the hearts of the armies of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were focus on home now the conquest was over. They had come to fight beside their brothers seven long years before, leaving their wives, little ones, and homes on the other side of the Jordan. *“I wonder how little Esther and Eli looks today. Are they a lot bigger? Will they even know me when I get back? And my wife, how will she respond when I walk in the door? We are going home. Can you believe it? Going home!”*

The LORD and Joshua are not willing to send them home quietly. What they did, their commitment to Good and their faithfulness to their word and promise must be noted. Because God’s people of Joshua’s day needed to see it and we do too. There are three things we will pause to look at in this farewell. **(1)** First, we will see the rehearsal of their veracity. **(2)** Then we will think about the parting exhortation that Joshua gives. **(3)** Finally, we will see the blessings that God gave them.

I. Joshua Recites Their Fulfillment of Their Promise (v. 1-4)

II. Joshua’s Exhortation to Spiritual Faithfulness (v. 5-6)

III. Joshua Acknowledges God’s Blessings (v.7-9)

I. Joshua Recites Their Fulfillment of Their Promise (v. 1-4)

A. When all the inheritance on the west side of Jordan was distributed by the LORD through Joshua, the time had come for the two and a half tribes who had settled on the east side of Jordan. So, Joshua called the two and a half tribes to him to officially release them from their commitment and send them home. (Joshua 22:1-4)

“Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, and said to them: ‘You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. You have not left your brethren these many days, up to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan.’”

1. Joshua thanks them by citing publically their faithfulness in keeping their word to Moses, Joshua, and the LORD Himself. In doing this he cites the promise that these tribes made in **Joshua 1:12-15**.

“And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh Joshua spoke, saying, ‘Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, “The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you

this land.” Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD’s servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise.”

2. This was no small commitment that these men make. They left their new homes, wives, and children for seven years. They did not know at the beginning how long the conquest would take, but they made an open ended commitment to be there until the job was done. This was a time of no phones, no Skype, and no mail. They were utterly cut off from their loved ones for as long as it took. We so easily overlook the incredible commitment these folks made to the LORD. We do not know any of these men by name, but God wants us to recognize that He honors people who are committed to Him.

B. I wonder what kind of commitments have we made to God and have we been faithful in carrying out those commitments? I am impressed with how short lived are some of our “commitments to God?

1. Over the years I have been in many emotional special meetings where many have come forward in tears and made commitments to the Lord only to have those decisions cool off and get undecided when the excitement of the meetings or campfires have faded into our memories.

2. How solid are these commitments to God? I believe in well thought out, soul searching commitments to God that are not spur of the moment, but life changing. This decision, although it happened in just a few pages of Scripture, changes these men’s lives and families forever. Are we as careful when we do business with God?

II. Joshua’s Exhortation to Spiritual Faithfulness (v. 5-6)

A. After rehearsing their faithfulness, Joshua reminded them to stay close to the LORD God. ***“But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.’ So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.”*** (Joshua 22:5–6).

B. Why did Joshua take time to remind them to be faithful to the LORD? It is because of a principle that we often forget. It is easier to stay close to God in the trouble than it is in the easy times. When the bottom falls out of our lives, we are desperate for someone or something to hold on to, so we reach out to God. However, when the sun shines on our

shoulder and everything is going our way, we easily forget God. We need to have God both in the heat of the battle and in the ease of the peace. Paul told us remarkably that he knew how to both abound and to suffer want still keep close to God. Beware lest abundance divide us from Him.

Do we take time to grow in our relationship with God so that we learn to love Him with all our hearts and all our souls? Are we careful to obey in the sunshine and in the rain of our lives? It is vitally important we do that, because if we learn to love Him in the sunshine, we find Him faithful in the difficult times.

III. Joshua Acknowledges God's Blessings (v.7-9)

A. First, Joshua rehearsed their fulfillment of their promise. Then he reminded them of the importance of staying faithful to God and loving Him as they should. Finally, Joshua acknowledged the abundance of blessing that God sent home with them.

B. *“Now to half the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half of it Joshua gave a possession among their brethren on this side of the Jordan, westward. And indeed, when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, and spoke to them, saying, ‘Return with much riches to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, with gold, with bronze, with iron, and with very much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.’ So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.”* (Joshua 22:7–9).

C. All this stuff does not strike us as all that valuable. But in Joshua’s day it was great wealth. God had never promised them a great outpouring of wealth as a part of this bargain. He had already given them a tremendous inheritance of land and cities. But God now added His blessing to them.

It seems to me three applications that we need to make here.

(1) If we are faithful to God He too will acknowledge our faithfulness. In **1 Corinthians 15:58**, after Paul has rehearsed the resurrection of the righteous and the conquest of death, he applies this truth very practically, he said,
“Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

If we are faithful, all our faithfulnesses to God will be acknowledged.

(2) We must be careful to always be building our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Loving and serving Him in the good times can be more difficult in the good times than the

bad times. But the better we know Him when the sun shines, the more real He is to us when the clouds move into our lives.

(3) Remember the parable of the unprofitable servant? When we have done everything we can, we have really done only what is our duty to do. But like these men of the two and a half tribes. God abundantly blesses and rewards us when we do not deserve it. We call that grace.