

## Numbers Chapter 32- John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is "The danger of compromise". Let's be honest, most of us don't think of compromising with someone as being a bad thing. If anything, learning to compromise is the secret of a successful relationship with anyone in life. That is not what I am talking about here.
  - a) The issue has to do with compromising with God's desire for our lives. Keep in mind that He will only take us as far as we want to go in our relationship with Him. What I mean by that is God may desire certain things for our lives, but if we only want to reach say the half way mark of that goal, God says to us in effect, if that is what you want, I won't force you to go any further. However, I have so much more I desire of you if you are willing to completely trust Me with your life.
  - b) So how do we know what He desires of us anyway? I've never had a big message written across the sky saying, "I want you to do this". I like to describe it as, doing the things that one can't stand not doing. It is about taking a desire that we want to accomplish for Him, and working our way through lives to accomplish that goal. To state the obvious, one has to assume that desire is biblical and it works for the glory of God in all that we do.
    - i) What if that goal requires more education? What if I can't work on that goal now as my current situation prevents me from doing it? If one believes that is what God wants of you, one has to work and pray their way toward the goal. One has to work with the person or group one is living with and honestly say, here is what I would like to accomplish in my life, and let's see if I can work toward that goal.
      - a) Let me explain this one more way. I may set a goal to run a 100-meter dash faster than anybody in history. I may or may not accomplish that goal. I'm just saying that one has to honestly look at his or her life and contemplate, is that what God desire of me? If it is, help me reach that goal.
      - b) I'll use politics as another example: God may put in the heart of people to run for certain political offices. However, the results determine the actual will of who actually wins at that moment in time. Abraham Lincoln was famous for losing most of his political races before he became president.
  - c) OK, nice common sense advice. What does this have to do with Numbers Chapter 32?
    - i) The Israelites are now just outside of the Promised Land. At this point, two of the twelve tribes looked where they were and said in effect, this land where we are now is a great place to live. We have lots of livestock. This appears to be a great place to raise that livestock. They ask their civil leader (Moses) and the spiritual leader (Eleazar, Moses' nephew), is it ok if we live here?
    - ii) Moses responds with, "It is God's desire that all of us cross over the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land". If you stay here, it will discourage the rest of the Israelites to do likewise. A compromise was reached where those men from those tribes had to go enter the land of Israel and fight. Meanwhile, their wives and kids were to set up places to live at their present location until the men get back.
    - iii) On the surface, this does seem like a nice compromise. Like solving any problem where two parties don't agree, a compromise was worked out. Now members of these two tribes get to live where they want and at the same time the men of those tribes still have to fight the residents of the Promised Land just as God desires they do. This seems like an "everybody wins" scenario.
      - a) The problem of course is that God desires His will for our lives. To state a point I make a lot, the "Promised Land" is about our complete trust in God for every aspect of our lives. Whenever we compromise from what is His desire for our lives is when we usually end up in trouble.

2. As one reads this chapter, one should not just see it as a story of ancient history where one group of people refuse to do all that Moses and God desires of them. One should see it as a guide to our own lives in terms of what He wants us to accomplish.
  - a) Grant it, none of us are perfect. More than that, we may not be able to accomplish what it is we desire due to our circumstances. We may die before we accomplish our goals. The question each of us, including myself have to regularly ask is, "If I knew for sure I had say exactly 100 more days to live, am I using that time as I believe He desires of me?"
  - b) To state the obvious some more, we still have obligations to fulfill and most likely we will live a lot longer than any specified time period. What always needs to be kept in mind is the concept that we only have one life to live and there is no greater purpose in life than to use our time to make a difference for God in this lifetime.
  - c) As to the specifics of what we should do, pray one's way through it. It is usually a matter of asking God something like "Here I am right now in this circumstance. I can't change what has happened to me in the past and I still have specific things I have to deal with. Given that You (God), know that, what it is Your desire of me right now, so that I can use the most valuable thing I own, my time, in order to make a difference for You?"
    - i) You would be probably be surprised to learn the answers to that question. I am convinced that there is nothing God appreciates more than when we say in effect, "My time belongs to you, God, what do You want me to do with it?" That is in effect how we surrender our lives to Him. By offering Him what we have in life.
    - ii) OK, with that convicting introduction completed, it is time for us to get back into the wilderness just outside of Israel.
3. Chapter 32, Verse 1: The Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large herds and flocks, saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were suitable for livestock. <sup>2</sup> So they came to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the community, and said, <sup>3</sup> "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo and Beon-- <sup>4</sup> the land the LORD subdued before the people of Israel--are suitable for livestock, and your servants have livestock. <sup>5</sup> If we have found favor in your eyes," they said, "let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan."
  - a) For those of you familiar with the geography of that area, the Israelites are now just on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee. Here is where the opening scene takes place. In order for the Israelites to actually enter the land of Israel they had to cross over the Jordan River, which is the main water source that feeds into the Sea of Galilee. That is the "where" here.
    - i) Speaking of "where", we get nine cities or towns mentioned here in Verse 3. These are the names of the places that were conquered and destroyed by the Israelites as they journeyed their way to the land of Israel. At this point, the leaders of two of the twelve tribes looked around and said, "Hey while we were all busy conquering these places, we noticed that our cattle (and presumably other animals) graze well here. After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, this appears to be the best place to raise animals that we have seen."
    - ii) The reason I'm sharing all of this is not to make us experts on the geography just east (actually southeast) of the nation of Israel. My point is to talk about the risk of judging what we see, versus what God desires. Let's be honest, most of the sins we commit in our lives are based on desiring things that we see, and then ignoring what God desires that we do.
    - iii) To use a sports analogy, we get our eyes off the ball and start to focus on things we see around us. I'm not saying that everything we see is bad. I'm just saying that I am convinced that our eyes are the biggest windows to look away from what He desires that we accomplish with our lives.
      - a) That is the risk the Israelites committed here and that is usually what distracts me from doing His will at any given moment in my life.

- b) Let me try to paraphrase this group of Israelites some more: We are tired of fighting. We are tired of wandering through the wilderness. We are tired of being on the move. We like this spot right here. We like the land we just conquered. It is not like we didn't have to fight so far. Let us take what we have right here and we can be done with struggling. What is more, we have lots of livestock, as if the other Israelites didn't have any.
    - i) This leads us back to the issue of "what is wrong with compromise". It is not a bad thing in terms of getting two parties to get along with each other. It is a bad thing when it is less than what God desires of us. It is like realizing what is in front of us is a good thing to desire, but let me share with you something even better.
  - c) Before I move on, let me share some Israelite history long after they settle in the Promised Land. The two tribes that do settle here, eventually get conquered. In the Gospel of Mark (Chapter 5, 1-18) Jesus visits this same location over 1,000 years later. By Jesus' time, this area was no longer considered Jewish territory. What was cattle grazing country for those two tribes became a land of "non-kosher" pigs in that gospel story. My point here is when we settle for less than what God desires for us, it may seem like a good idea at first, but before we know it, we will lose what seems appealing to us. (My thanks to Jon Curson for this illustration and tie of the Gospel story to Numbers.)
    - i) Ok, onto the big question: How do we know that what we desire is not God's will for our lives? Sometimes the answer is obvious. If it is sinful, the answer is no. If we start to pray about a situation and we believe God is saying "no", consider that an indication. If it violates a biblical principal, that is an obvious no.
    - ii) What about when it is not so obvious. Let's use a job promotion as an illustration. One would assume a job promotion with more pay is usually a good thing. The question we always need to ask is simply, "Is that what God desires of me, or is there is something else He wants me to accomplish with my life?" That answer is going to be different for every person. All we can do is pray our way through any given situation, and then make the best decision possible at that moment. I find that if something is not God's will, He makes it obvious to us, as He will to these Israelites way back here in the book of Numbers.
    - iii) Speaking of those Israelites, let us get back to the story at hand.
4. Verse 6: Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, "Shall your countrymen go to war while you sit here?" <sup>7</sup> Why do you discourage the Israelites from going over into the land the LORD has given them? <sup>8</sup> This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to look over the land. <sup>9</sup> After they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and viewed the land, they discouraged the Israelites from entering the land the LORD had given them. <sup>10</sup> The LORD's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath: <sup>11</sup> 'Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of the men twenty years old or more who came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob-- <sup>12</sup> not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the LORD wholeheartedly.' <sup>13</sup> The LORD's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone.
- a) It's time for my "short version": The leaders of these two groups approached Moses and said we want to live here. Moses then told the story of their parents generation where the twelve spies went into the land of Israel. Because most of those spies brought back a bad report, that generation was sentenced to die out in the wilderness. That story is being told here. Since most of us know that story from earlier in Numbers, we can move on.
  - b) Remember that Moses is about 120 years old here. I picture these younger men coming to Moses like he was their grandfather. Here goes "grandpa" telling one of his stories again about what has happened a long time ago. I can just see the tribal leaders thinking, "That was then. This is now. Why can't we just settle here in this land? Just because God acted that way back then, doesn't mean He'll act the same way now."

- c) Let us also remember why these Israelites didn't just do what they wanted to do. The rest of the Israelites outnumbered them. Suppose they just settled down there, just outside of the land of Israel. If the other tribes objected, these two tribes could be attacked and they are outnumbered "ten to two". That is why it was necessary for the leaders of those two tribes to approach all the other tribal leaders and ask their permission.
- d) With that said, the text is recalling history from many chapters ago in Numbers. Moses was there when it happened and these other men were not there. Moses recalled how angry God got about the Israelites back then refusing to do His will. That is the reason why the parents' generation had to suffer for 40 years. My point is Moses is telling the leaders of these two tribes, "God does not change. He does not approve of disobedience then and He doesn't approve of disobedience now."
  - i) To steal a classic phrase, "Those who fail to learn from history repeat its mistakes". Moses is saying, learn from history. I'm saying, learn from your bible. If we want to learn what is God's desire for our lives today, study what it is that He desired the Israelites to do and use that as a model.
  - ii) Let' me try this another way: What is it that God desires of us as Christians? Let's start with the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus said in effect that if we do believe He is God, then we should go into the entire world making disciples of people from all nations. Therefore, if one is not sure what God desires of your life and my life, start with that commission. For some people that means traveling to distant places. For others, it just means to make a difference right where we are.
  - iii) A famous pastor from the 19th Century was once asked, how do I know where is my mission field? The pastor responded with the question, "Where do you work?" I believe the other man responded that he worked for a railroad company. Then the pastor said those who work with you at the railroad is your mission field.
    - a) My point is that to live the Christian life is about making a difference to the world around us. That could be at our job, it could be to the people we live with. It is about using our time to make a difference for Jesus.
  - iv) This leads me back to Moses and the leaders of those two tribes. Back then, God made it clear to Moses that the Israelites were to go to the actual land of Israel and conquer the residents there. The reward for this service was that they got to live in that land. Their parents were too afraid to do this and then they were sentenced to die in the wilderness. Now forty years later, here are two of the twelve Israelite tribes telling Moses that they don't want to go fight. If they did not go, it would discourage the other tribes. It was also against what God desired for their lives.
  - v) The "land" that God wants us to conquer is whatever things keep us from trusting Him with every aspect of our lives. That includes those things that are appealing to us at any given moment. The point is that Moses wanted the best for all of the Israelites. The best involves completely committing our lives to serving God and not compromising on that trust in Him for every aspect of our lives.
  - vi) Meanwhile, Moses is still chewing out these tribal leaders in the next set of verses.
- 5. Verse 14: "And here you are, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the LORD even more angry with Israel. <sup>15</sup> If you turn away from following him, he will again leave all this people in the desert, and you will be the cause of their destruction."
  - a) John's loose translation, "What makes you think, "That was then, this is now" is different than what is was back in my day?" Moses is saying to them, what makes you think that when you compromise with God's plan for our lives is different from when your parents also failed to be obedient to His desires. Stop and remember how your parents suffered."
  - b) The reminder to us is that when we make the decision to turn from His desire, it not only hurts us, but it also hurts others around us. By these two tribes making this decision, it could do harm to the rest of the tribes by their disobedience.

6. Verse 16: Then they came up to him and said, "We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children.<sup>17</sup> But we are ready to arm ourselves and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our women and children will live in fortified cities, for protection from the inhabitants of the land.<sup>18</sup> We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance.<sup>19</sup> We will not receive any inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan, because our inheritance has come to us on the east side of the Jordan."
- a) At this point, the leaders of these two tribes proposed a different plan. The short version is that the men of these two tribes would go fight in the land and their wives and children would remain here while they were off fighting.
    - i) If you stop and think about it, this is a gutsy thing to propose. The men would have no idea how long they would be gone fighting. Their women and children would be in danger of being attacked and even wild animals attacking them while they are gone. The men would not have the supplies they need that their animals can provide if they left all of them here.
    - ii) Technically, this is not a violation of what God desired. In effect, His orders were to go conquer the land of Israel. He never said they have to live there once they conquer the local residents. Still, it is accepting less than what God desires of our lives when we are willing to compromise with Him in any fashion.
    - iii) Earlier I discussed how Jesus visited this same area over 1,000 years later. As of Jesus time, the Israelites no longer control that area. What was a land for cattle became a land for non-kosher pigs as told in that story. The point is when one starts to compromise with what God desires for our lives, we will discover our lives go downhill in that we eventually lose what we thought was appealing to us.
  - b) Before the members of these two tribes leave for war, they do ask permission to build some cities for them for protection for them and for their animals. Since the time frame between this story and the time the Israelites actually cross the Jordan River is a relatively short time (most scholars estimate it was about a month or two), I doubt the cities that were built here were very sophisticated. I think they just used stones to create pens for the animals and borders for their families. It still left their families vulnerable without the men there helping to defend that land.
  - c) All of this leads to Moses response to this modified proposal:
7. Verse 20: Then Moses said to them, "If you will do this--if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for battle,<sup>21</sup> and if all of you will go armed over the Jordan before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out before him--<sup>22</sup> then when the land is subdued before the LORD, you may return and be free from your obligation to the LORD and to Israel. And this land will be your possession before the LORD.
- a) Bottom line, "you got a deal". Moses is saying, "If this is what you want, and if you agree to go fight with us, you can have this land."
  - b) There is an old Christian expression that the Holy Spirit is a gentleman. What I mean by that is the idea of God saying to us, "If that is what you want, fine. I'll let you have what you want. I desire more of you, but if desire to settle for less, we can live with that choice and watch the results of that decision play out." As I've beaten this point to death by now, that is what the members of these two tribes are doing here.
8. Verse 23: "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.<sup>24</sup> Build cities for your women and children, and pens for your flocks, but do what you have promised."
- a) We now come to the most famous verse in this passage. It is memorization time. ☺ I'll make it easy, just learn the last half of Verse 23 that says, "You may be sure that your sin will find you out." John's very loose translation: We can't get away with anything. What ever sin we commit, will come back to haunt us, whether we realize it or not.

- b) Let me explain further by saying what is the sin danger here with these Israelites. The sin is making the commitment to enter the Promised Land and failing to do so. Two chapters ago, the big issue of that moment was about the failure to keep a vow. Here the members of these two tribes are in effect making a vow. That vow is for them to go with the rest of the Israelites and go fight in the Promised Land.
    - i) Moses is not just saying than everyone else will notice they all are missing. He is saying that God holds them accountable for the vows that they make and some way God will punish them if they fail to keep that commitment.
  - c) Over the millennia, there have probably been many thousands of sermons preached on that specific principal of "your sin will find your out". It is designed to make us feel guilty over sins we have committed and keep us on our toes. Most of us know the expression, "fear of the Lord". That concept is called the beginning of wisdom in Proverbs Chapter 1. The idea is not about fearing hell, but to fear His judgment for our sins in this lifetime.
    - i) To put it a better way, God loves us too much to leave us alone. He cares too much about our lives to let us get away with sin. That is why our sins will find us out. I find that Christians can't get away with sin as much as nonbelievers. The guilt we feel over sin is God's way of keeping us close to Him with our lives.
    - ii) I'm not saying we have to be perfect people. I am saying that God won't let us get away with not feeling guilty over sin. If we care about pleasing Him, that is a good sign that one is on the right path in life.
    - iii) OK enough lecturing about our sins. The point here is that if those Israelites failed to travel across the Jordan River into the Promised Land, God is promising them that somehow and someday they will suffer if they fail to keep that vow.
    - iv) It may help to remember that Moses himself knows he will die before that crossing takes place, which is another reason why he is lecturing this group of people.
  - d) Before this event is to take place, Moses tells the leaders of these two tribes in Verse 24, to go build some homes for your wives and children. I admit that if I knew I was going to go fight in a big war and I was told to go build my own house first, I might take my time with that job. ☺ With the ten other tribes waiting on you to finish that job, I suspect there was pressure on those two tribes to get moving. That is why scholars say that the places they built were not that elaborate in the first place.
    - i) I sort of picture those men telling the wives, "Here is enough of a structure to tie you over, it is up to you to elaborate on this place until we get back."
    - ii) I suppose the main point here is that Moses and these two tribes agreed to keep this compromise even though it was not what God desired for them to do.
    - iii) Speaking of obeying that compromise, notice these next three verses.
9. Verse 25: The Gadites and Reubenites said to Moses, "We your servants will do as our lord commands. <sup>26</sup> Our children and wives, our flocks and herds will remain here in the cities of Gilead. <sup>27</sup> But your servants, every man armed for battle, will cross over to fight before the LORD, just as our lord says."
- a) It may help to remember here that this second generation of Israelites were all under the age of sixty at this point. The exceptions were Moses, who was probably close to 120 at this point, and Joshua and Caleb, the two spies that brought the good report 40 years ago.
    - i) My point is the leaders of these two tribes did not say, "Hey the old man has lost it, let's go live out here and ignore everyone else." They respected Moses as the leader of all twelve of the tribes of Israel and said in effect, we will do as God commands us to do, which was to go invade the land of Israel.
    - ii) Because God never said the Israelites had to actually live in that land afterwards, Moses gives them what they want, agrees to the compromise, and says in effect you all can live here once the war is over. With that said, the men of these two tribes agreed to go fight with the rest of the Israelites.

10. Verse 28: Then Moses gave orders about them to Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun and to the family heads of the Israelite tribes.<sup>29</sup> He said to them, "If the Gadites and Reubenites, every man armed for battle, cross over the Jordan with you before the LORD, then when the land is subdued before you, give them the land of Gilead as their possession."<sup>30</sup> But if they do not cross over with you armed, they must accept their possession with you in Canaan."
- a) To understand these verses, one has to remember that Moses knew he would die before the Israelites would actually cross the Jordan River and begin that campaign. I have to admit, that if I knew I was going to die soon, I would be saying something like, "Hey, I'm about to die. You go work out your own problems." Instead Moses still shows leadership skills all the way until God says "OK, Moses, now is it". That fact alone is a good model of how we should live out our own Christian life. Until God says "now", we should be busy doing the work of the kingdom, which is about using our time to make a difference for God with whatever amount of time He gives us.
  - b) With that speech out of my system, the point here is Moses gives orders to the head priest Eleazar, and the next civil leader Joshua, that if the members of those two tribes do cross over the Jordan River with you, after the war is over, then they can come here and have this specific set of land. Again, for those who are interested in geography, this is the land southeast of the Sea of Galilee. This is outside the traditional borders of land of Israel. By the time of Jesus visited there over a thousand years later, that area became Gentile (non-Jewish) territory.
    - i) That is why I mentioned earlier in the lesson the story that when Jesus visited that land, it was known as a place for raising pigs, which are "non-kosher". My point is that when we compromise what God desires of our lives, we end up losing what we think we get as it is not His will for our lives.
  - c) Meanwhile, back at "command central" with Moses and the leaders of these two tribes, he then says something interesting in Verse 30. He says in effect that if these men don't cross over the Jordan River with everyone else, they must live with them in Israel.
    - i) I was trying to think how that would work practically. Would that mean that the rest of the Israelites would have to drag the people from those two tribes there?
    - ii) Moses is telling the Gadites and Reubenites that they either have to come along peacefully with the other tribes or else they will be forced to cross over.
    - iii) I also thought about it another way. These two tribes have to live somewhere. Moses is saying, "either you live here or you live there." You obviously want to live here which is why you came to talk about it in the first place. However, if you fail to obey God, we will force you to live there whether you like it or not.
      - a) But if the goal is to get all the Israelites to live in the Promised Land, why is that a punishment? Besides the fact they don't want to live there, I think the motivation is for those two tribes to see the good things that God wants to bless them with.
      - b) As I've now beaten to death, the idea of the Promised Land, is about fully trusting God with every aspect of our lives. That is how God blesses our lives by our willingness to trust Him in every way. With the members of these two tribes actually crossing that river, they can see for themselves what it is God desires for their lives.
      - c) Therefore, Moses says in effect, "either you come willingly into that land or the rest of the Israelites will drag you there so you can see what it is that God desires for your lives." I find that is often how God shows us His will for our lives, by in effect dragging us to where He desires that we be.
  - d) The next set of verses is the response of the leaders of these two tribes. The short version is they think about their options and say, we will agree to fight, but first let us go build some homes for our families and then we promise to cooperate.

11. Verse 31: The Gadites and Reubenites answered, "Your servants will do what the LORD has said.  
<sup>32</sup>We will cross over before the LORD into Canaan armed, but the property we inherit will be on this side of the Jordan."
- a) The short version here is that these two tribes are willing to accept less than what God desired of their lives. They will go and fight but they want to live outside of Israel.
  - b) On the surface, this seems like an "everybody wins" situation. However anytime one is willing to compromise with God's desire for one's life, one does lose. In fact, in the next set of verses we are going to read of another tribe saying in effect, "If it is acceptable to settle for less, we too want to be part of that action". That desire to compromise spread.
  - c) Think of it this way: It is one thing to go off and fight in a war, knowing that there are a large number of people around who will keep an eye on one's wife and children. It is another to be willing to leave them alone in an area where raiding parties can attack them. As I said, the decision is gutsy because it exposes their families of any lack of protection.
  - d) Let me move on to the more difficult question: How do we know what is God's will for our lives? How do we know if we are compromising with His will? Let's be honest, we don't get commands like these Israelites to go do "this or that"? To ask that question even another way, "How do I know when I am compromising?"
    - i) The best answer I can give is a sense of comfortableness. If we are seeking Him daily, asking for His guidance, trusting in His will, I am convinced that we will just know what is His will. It is not blind faith. It is about trusting in His word, doing what it teaches and then making the best decisions possible.
    - ii) Yes there is always the sense that we are not doing enough. Many believers on their deathbed fear that they haven't done enough for Him. The response to such ideas is to say, if you have done what He has asked of you, why would you want to do more? God does not expect us to be supermen and women, just to use some of our time and resources to make that difference for Him. If one is willing to do that, one will discover one will enjoy life far more than if one is just willing to live to satisfy one's own desires.
    - iii) But isn't being helpful a built-in desire? Yes, because God built us with a need to worship Him. We can fulfill that desire in other ways, or we can use our lives in order to make that difference for Him. To state the obvious, there are other needs in our lives that have to be met as well. Again, God does not desire that we each be supermen and superwomen, just a willingness to be lead by Him in order to use our lives to make that difference. That is what living in the Promised Land is all about and that is the compromise these two nations were agreeing to here.
    - iv) I want to end this discussion with a reminder that just because God desires that we use our lives to make a difference for Him, it does not mean it will be easy. I've yet to meet one Christians who does take the time to make a difference for God who doesn't work hard at accomplishing that goal. Part of making that difference is a willingness to work through obstacles and learning to adjust to situations in order to make that difference.
    - v) Almost any person who has gone out in the mission field will tell you that what they thought they would be doing on day one, was a lot different from what they ended up doing. That too, is part of learning to trust God with their lives.
    - vi) Ok, enough lecturing. It is time to get back to these Israelites.
12. Verse 33: Then Moses gave to the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan--the whole land with its cities and the territory around them.
- a) In effect, this one verse, brings up a whole new discussion. Now instead of just the two tribes (Gadites and Reubenites) wanting to live outside of Israel, we also read about half of the tribe of Manasseh also wanting to join them. This is a discussion all unto itself.



- b) To explain this, we have to recall a story from a few chapters back. For those of you who read my lessons regularly, you will remember the story about five daughters of one man with no brothers who were worried about losing their inheritance. That was the story in Chapter 27 where I explained how Jesus was the legal son of David through his adopted father Joseph. That was about how Moses decided about how those five sisters were to share in a family's inheritance if there were no brothers involved.
- i) I bring that up here as those five sisters were of the tribe of Manasseh. Now here is half of that tribe of Manasseh saying, "Wait a second, if these other two tribes can live outside of the Promised Land, and it is acceptable for women to share in a family's inheritance, let our women live here too, that way if we men don't come back from war, they too can have that section of land for themselves."
  - ii) Am I positive that is the reason this half of a tribe wanted to go live with the other two? No, but it is the most likely scenario that fits in this story. As further proof, when we get to Chapter 36, that issue is brought up again, and since this story takes place in between the two references to the same issue, I think that is why the Manasseh's brought it up in the first place. In other words, some of them wanted to live outside of Israel as well, but they let the other two tribes "do the dirty work" of bringing it to Moses, and once he said yes, then they joined the action.
  - iii) There is also another practical problem here. That is, if the other two tribes are going to settle east of Jerusalem, where will this other half a tribe live? There is only so much "good grass area" there for the cattle to graze. That is why we are going to read of this half a tribe having to conquer some other areas outside of the land of Israel quickly for them to settle there in the next set of verses.
- c) Coming back to the verses, the main point here is that the two tribes already mentioned are willing to live in the lands that the Israelites already conquered. Additional land east of Israel is going to be needed if half of this third tribe is to join them.
- d) Before I move on, I'm overdue for another "why should I care speech"? ☺ Why should we care that these Israelites lived east of Israel? Yes we get the idea of wanting less than what God desires of our lives, but tell me why should I care about these specific details here?
- i) The first thing is to get the idea that "compromise with God's desire grows". Once we are willing to turn from what He desires, it is amazing to watch the reasons come forward why we can't do His will. There are always excuses one can make for not living to make a difference for God or making a complete commitment to follow Him with our lives. There are always other things that have to be done.
  - ii) Let me explain it a different way: I would summarize Satan's goal is to prevent the spread of Christianity. If Satan understands that God will win in the end, the longer Satan can prevent Jesus' return from happening, the more time he has to before he will be sentenced to hell forever. The bible clearly teaches that there are "x" number of people who will be saved. Only God the Father knows what is that number. Think about it logically: Heaven will only contain a specific number of people, not an infinite number. Therefore that number "x" has to happen one day.
    - a) That is why Satan's goal is not to take away our salvation. He can't do that. But He can work to make us ineffective Christians. That is his desire. My point is simply that once we do decide to live our lives to trust God and live to make a difference for Him, we can expect spiritual resistance as we are now speeding up Satan's demise. As I like to say, if you don't believe that Satan is real, try opposing him for awhile and watch what happens.
    - b) That little speech leads me back to these verses. The point here is two of the tribes of Israel are compromising with what God desired of them. Now we read of part of a third tribe willing to join in that compromise. That is why I'm pointing out the danger of compromise spreading.

13. Verse 34: The Gadites built up Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, <sup>35</sup> Atroth Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, <sup>36</sup> Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran as fortified cities, and built pens for their flocks. <sup>37</sup> And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh and Kiriathaim, <sup>38</sup> as well as Nebo and Baal Meon (these names were changed) and Sibmah. They gave names to the cities they rebuilt.
- a) One thing that I am grateful for in this ministry, is that I get to cut and paste the text. That means I don't have to try to pronounce all of these names. I'm positive I would butcher them if I said them out loud. Let's be honest, a few moments from now, I doubt any of us would even remember these towns unless these words have some specific meaning to our lives. So if that is true, why should I care about these places? Why is it important for us to know that these cities even exist? I was hoping you would ask that question.
    - i) It shows the demise of what happens once one is willing to compromise with God. If one studies the history of ancient Israel after this time period, one will learn that eventually the Israelites lost this territory. All of these cities that these Israelites built (or rebuilt and renamed) were eventually lost to foreigners.
    - ii) That is why I mentioned early in the lesson the story about when Jesus sentenced a large group of demons to go enter a bunch of pigs. If one thinks about that story, it seems strange. Why would demons want to enter pigs in the first place? If the goal of demons is to stop the spread of Christianity, why would they agree to go enter a bunch of pigs and drive them into the sea? The answer is because those pigs were the livelihood of those living in that territory. Let's be honest, there are few things that would turn us away from making a difference for God if we lost our ability to earn an income. By the demons killing the pigs, they took away the earnings of the residents of that area. It literally took a trust in Jesus in order to overcome that loss, but that is another story.
    - iii) I bring all of that up here, to see the demise of that same territory from the time the Israelites settled here, to the time of Jesus, which was over 1,000 years later. What was good cattle grazing land for Israelites eventually became non-kosher pig land for non-Israelites. Once we are willing to compromise with what God desires for our lives, we eventually lose what at first seems appealing.
    - iv) So what does all of that mean for you and me? It is the danger of trusting in what we see as opposed to trusting in God's word. That is the short version of what the two and one half tribes did here: Going against His desire because what we see in front of us is visually attractive. I'm not saying everything we see is bad for us. I am saying that when we compromise what His word clearly teaches us based on what we see, that is when we know we are going down the wrong path.
    - v) While we are all mulling over our guilt, ☺ I'll sneak back to the text.
14. Verse 39: The descendants of Makir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, captured it and drove out the Amorites who were there. <sup>40</sup> So Moses gave Gilead to the Makirites, the descendants of Manasseh, and they settled there. <sup>41</sup> Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, captured their settlements and called them Havvoth Jair. <sup>42</sup> And Nobah captured Kenath and its surrounding settlements and called it Nobah after himself.
- a) If you recall, I said that there was not enough good cattle grazing land that was already conquered for the two and one half tribes. In other words, the members of the two tribes that approached Moses earlier in this chapter said in effect, "all this land that we have already conquered is good enough for us, but not enough for anyone else".
  - b) That is why we have these final four verses here. The "half tribe of Manasseh" had to go do some more conquering. We don't get a lot of details of these wars. All the text says in effect is that these Manasseh's had to go conquer some more area in order to live there.
  - c) The other point of this text is that Moses agreed to this plan and gave that land to them.
  - d) My question is, if this is not what God desired, why did Moses agree to this plan? Why did he let them conquer this additional area and settle there? Another good question.

- i) The answer comes back to the principal that if we desire to compromise with God, He will let us. It is like God saying, "I want the best for you. However, if you desire to settle for less, I will let you have what you want to see the consequences."
  - ii) As I stated earlier in the lessons there is an old expression that "The Holy Spirit is a gentleman", which is another way of saying God will let us settle for less if that is what we desire of our lives. At the same time, He will help us see The Promised Land like these armies will see so that they can know what is God's desire for their lives if they choose to live that way.
- e) Let me end this section by describing it from another perspective: What about the local residents that were killed in order for the Israelites to live there? Was that God's desire too? Tough question. For all I know, they may have been part of the people that God desired to judge for the 400 years that they have been doing child sacrifices, which is a point I've pretty much beaten to death in previous lessons. I've used the expression "mercy killing" many times, but let me try it one more way. Imagine if a dog has rabies. That dog is going to die soon. The most merciful thing one can do is kill the dog before it spread the rabies to others. That in effect is how God is using the Israelites to judge the residents of this area.
  - i) I also take comfort in the idea that God will judge all of us fairly one day. That is how I can sleep knowing that children and other innocent people were killed. It is better to believe in a perfect God that judges the world perfectly than to believe in the idea that all of life as we know it eventually has no purpose. My job and your job are to live to make a difference for God. His job is to judge people fairly based on how they have lived their lives.
- 15. With that said, we finished this chapter. I've now beaten to death the idea of understanding that God desires we use our lives to make a difference for Him and trust Him to guide our lives.
  - a) Compromising with that idea is compromising with what He desires of us.
  - b) Learning what He desires of us is a lifetime of learning and adjusting to what is we can do at any given moment in time.
  - c) Living to make a difference for Him, gives us a greater purpose than any thing we can do just to enrich our own lives.
  - d) I heard one preacher say it this way: There are things in life we are paid to do, and things we are made to do." We should never get "paid and made" mixed up. Both of them are usually necessary. An important part of life is to constantly learn how to balance the two so that we can use the most valuable thing we have, our time for His glory.
  - e) What God has called each of us to do is going to be different. Part of the joy of living the Christian life is learning how to use one's talents and one's circumstances by His power in order to make that difference for Him. If one does not know where to start or where to go from here, welcome to the club. It is a matter of regularly praying, regularly reading His word and asking His guidance. I usually find at that point, the answer is usually right in front us as He does guide us for His glory.
  - f) On that positive note, I'll wrap this up in our closing prayer.
- 16. Father, You give each of an unknown amount of time to live here. Help us to use that time as well as whatever resources we have to make a difference for You. Yes we have to balance that desire with other needs and requirements of our lives. Help us to have that balance and use that precious resource, our time to make a difference for You. You give us the privilege and honor of leading other people to You and helping others draw closer to You. Help us not to waste that precious resource (time, talents) on things that don't make an eternal difference. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.