

**Message #36****Joshua 22:1-9**

I know a story of a man who saw heavy action in Viet Nam. He was part of an elite force that went deep into the jungle areas to tackle some of the toughest missions, which at times seemed to be suicide missions. One particular time he was deep in the jungle, fearing for his life moment by moment for six straight weeks. It was intense warfare. But finally he made it out.

He was given a well-deserved break from the action. He went on a lengthy furlough. During that time, as some military men do, he went to town and got involved with a woman and the woman ended up giving this man a disease. He let his guard down just for a few moments and it affected him for the rest of his life.

As we come to this part of Joshua, the heavy wars and fighting are over. It is time to relax. It is time for some R & R. It is time to kick back and enjoy the blessings of God. The land had been taken and distributed. God had finally given rest to Israel and now it was time to enjoy life and enjoy Him. It is in these kinds of moments when God's people must be very careful not to let their guard down. That is the point of these verses:

**WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE FOUGHT HARD AND DONE RIGHT, THEY MAY BE COMMENDED AND ENCOURAGED TO ENJOY GOD'S BLESSINGS; BUT THEY MUST ALSO BE WARNED TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD AND HIS WORD.**

This is exactly what Joshua communicates in these verses—he commends, he commands, he challenges and he warns. There certainly was nothing wrong with these tribes of Israel enjoying life as long as God was kept in His proper place. The moment God's people became lapse in their relationship and commitment with Him, trouble would hit again.

Years ago, I knew of a man who was given quite a prestigious position in his company and was paid a large salary. Prior to this he was faithful to God, including in his giving. But when he got this promotion, something changed. He began to slack off from his responsibilities and he actually cut back on his giving, when in all reality he should have increased it. In a few months, he lost his promotion and his job. Just as God had given it, He took it away. I am convinced that one reason why God did that was because this believer forgot about God with all God had given him.

Joshua was very concerned that this never happen to Israel. So he takes the time to discuss some key things with some of the tribes so they would not forget about God. There are three main points of communication:

**POINT OF COMMUNICATION #1** – Joshua commends the two and one-half tribes. **22:1-4**

**We may recall that the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh had their property on the east side of the Jordan River.** The background to this is found in Numbers 32:1-7, 17-24.

Moses and then Joshua permitted these tribes to live on the other side of the Jordan in the rich and fertile land area as long as they fought for Israel and helped their brothers take the land.

These 2 ½ tribes had kept their end of the bargain. They had done their job. They crossed the Jordan and they fought for the Promised Land with the rest of their Jewish brothers. So Joshua was now commending them. They had earned this commendation and they deserve it.

There were two steps to the process of this commendation:

**Step #1** - Joshua summoned the tribes. **22:1**

A commendation should be face to face, man to man. So often we are negligent to look someone in the face and tell them they did a great job. But that is what Joshua does here. He calls them before him because he personally wanted to give this commendation. This is no proxy commendation; he summoned the tribes.

**Step #2** - Joshua commended the tribes. **22:2-4**

There are basically five commendations Joshua gives to these tribes. This is a great tribute to their faithfulness and integrity:

**(Commendation #1)** - You have completely obeyed Moses. **22:2a**

They had not obeyed all commandments in the Mosaic law, but they had specifically obeyed him concerning this matter of supporting the other tribes in their conquest. This would truly mean something to these tribes. It was this very reason that prevented Israel in past history from entering and enjoying the land—they would not obey Moses. There is no higher commendation than this. But they had obeyed God and they were commended for it.

**(Commendation #2)** - You have completely obeyed Joshua. **22:2b**

These tribes realized that Joshua was God's man to replace Moses and they fully obeyed him. God does raise up humans to communicate His truth to His people and when Joshua did that, they obeyed. Joshua had been faithful to communicate truth to them. Had he not done that, they would not be where they were. These people had good leaders and they followed them.

**(Commendation #3)** - You have not forsaken any of your responsibilities. **22:3a**

God does not commend quitters. He will not ever reward those who shirk their responsibilities or start something they don't finish. Commendation is not so much based on something we start, but something we finish. These tribes saw it through. Even though it took about seven years, they did not shirk responsibilities.

**(Commendation #4)** - You have kept the commandment of the LORD your God. **22:3b**

What a tremendous testimony. These tribes had obeyed the Word of God. They had kept it in the sense that they obeyed it. No matter how they felt they stayed true to the Word.

**(Commendation #5)** - You do not have to fight anymore but you can go home. **22:4**

Finally it was time to rest, relax and enjoy. The pressure was off and the battle was won.

What a day it will be when God calls us home. When He says you don't have to fight anymore on earth. Come on home. Those who stayed faithful and obeyed God and did not shirk responsibilities will be commended by Him.

**POINT OF COMMUNICATION #2** – Joshua warns the two and one-half tribes. **22:5**

Just because we have been faithful does not mean we don't need to be warned to stay faithful. It is not enough to be in the land or even enjoy the land; they needed to learn how to live and stay in the land. They were leaving Canaan to live outside and they needed to be warned.

Now Joshua had just commended them for obedience. They obeyed Moses, they obeyed Joshua and they obeyed God. So these people, at this time, are very faithful. But just because one has been very faithful in the past, does not automatically mean one will remain faithful in the future.

Now Joshua gives them a six part warning:

**(Part #1)** - Joshua warns them to be very careful to observe God's commandments and laws. **22:5a**

**(Part #2)** - Joshua warns them to be very careful to love God. **22:5b**

**(Part #3)** - Joshua warns them to be very careful to walk in all of God's ways. **22:5c**

**(Part #4)** - Joshua warns them to be very careful to keep God's commandments. **22:5d**

**(Part #5)** - Joshua warns them to be very careful to hold fast to their relationship with God. **22:5e**

**(Part #6)** - Joshua warns them to be very careful to serve God. **22:5f**

He qualifies this service as not to be half-hearted, but serve with all one's heart and soul. When times of blessing come, we should not back off in our service for God. In fact, we should intensify it.

Obviously, the tendency in times of blessing is to stop doing what he has just warned. In other words, when the blessings of God are upon God's people, the danger is to become lax in their love for God and His Word. The danger is to become lax in obeying God and serving God. The heart and soul may be lured away from a real commitment to God.

When we are blessed, we need to remember the commitment we had to God prior to the blessing and maintain that commitment. Joshua is warning these tribes of this very thing.

**POINT OF COMMUNICATION #3** – Joshua blesses the two and one half tribes and sends them home. **22:6-9**

Joshua blessed these tribes and included the whole tribe of Manasseh. We may recall half the tribes got land on the east side of the Jordan and half on the west side of the Jordan. They were all there to hear this.

When the two and one-half tribes went back home, they took some gifts with them which are clearly described in **verse 8**. They went back home with four spoil blessings:

**Blessing #1** - They went home with great riches. **22:8a**

**Blessing #2** - They went home with massive livestock. **22:8b**

**Blessing #3** - They went home with huge sums of money. **22:8c**

**Blessing #4** - They went home with many beautiful clothes. **22:8d**

This was a happy time and a good time. But this is the kind of time when one needs to be on careful guard.

**Verse 9** says they went from Shiloh in Canaan on the west side of the Jordan to Gilead in their own land on the east side of the Jordan.

Think of this; this group left the east side of the Jordan with nothing and because of their faithfulness to God, they return with wealth incalculable. Their faithfulness paid off and they were abundantly rewarded. **Faithfulness to God always pays off.**

Now, the most dangerous enemy was the enemy of self. In fact, one could ask why these tribes aren't in the land today. Why aren't they in this land enjoying the prosperity and blessings of God?

The land on the east side of the Jordan is controlled today by the Jordanians and Syrians and is threatened by ISIS. What has happened to this land? The warnings of **verse 5** were ignored and over time those blessings of God were removed.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying life, but when you do, don't forget God.

**PARTING THOUGHTS:**

- 1) Don't be afraid to compliment or commend someone who has faithfully served God.**
- 2) Don't be afraid to warn someone to obey the Word of God.**
- 3) Don't be afraid to enjoy the blessings of God.**
- 4) Don't stop your fervent love for God and His Word.**
- 5) Don't stop your fervent service for God.**