

Joshua 22

Something Worth Fighting For

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.

After the dividing the land among the tribes Joshua calls Ruben, Gad, and Manasseh together to release them to their inheritance which rests east of the Jordan River

A Quick Recap of their Story

Ruben, Gad, and Manasseh chose their own inheritance rather than trusting in the word of the Lord and the ways of God.

According to Numbers 32 the driving force behind their decision was when they saw that the land was good for livestock. They thought their path would lead them to a prosperous life

Numbers 32:1

Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; and when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that indeed the region was a place for livestock,

An agreement was reached that Reuben, Gad and Manasseh would assist the remaining tribes until Canaan had been conquered and the land distributed.

Numbers 32:16-18

Then they came near to him and said: "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, but we ourselves will be armed, ready to go before the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place; and our little ones will dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received his inheritance.

Their decision was

- **Driven** by a lack of trust in the Lord
- **Resulted** in an insignificant life as it relates to eternity
- And **ended** with their tragic defeat

Joshua 22 marks their departure from the Promised Land

This departure illustrates a person who is making their first steps toward departing from the Lord

- For that person, departure is not the goal but it is the destination
 - They don't see what they are doing as a departure instead they see it as a necessary pursuit
- They, like Lot of old, allowed temporal rather than eternal things to weigh their decision
- They never consider the long term, but like Esau choose the bowl of soup that is set before them
- They allow distance to develop between themselves and the congregation
- They set things up that make them feel religious although they had departed from the Lord
- They argue when confronted rather than accepting an invitation back to the Lord
- And ultimately it costs them, their witness and their families dearly

Before allowing them to depart, Joshua gives one final plea

Joshua 22:5-6

*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.*

These 5 principles alone could help each one of us chart our way to a successful and impactful Christian life

- Love God

- Walk in His ways
- Keep His word
- Hold on to Him
- Serve Him

It is after these events that things start to get a little "dicey"

Joshua 22:10-12

And when they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan—a great, impressive altar.

Now the children of Israel heard someone say, "Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan—on the children of Israel's side." And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them.

When news reached the ears of the 9 tribes that their brethren had erected a great and impressive altar they gathered together and prepared to go to war against them.

Why such a drastic response?

Weren't they brethren?

In 1999 Mikhail Gorbachev was quoted as saying;

"The buzz word of the new millennium will be compromise."

His sentiments were right on although his choice of words was slightly off.

The buzzword of the age is certainly tolerance.

Tolerance- the ability or willingness to tolerate the existence of opinions or behaviors that one dislikes or disagrees with

Or to treat with respect, dignity and value those whose views are different than yours

This is not a new concept

Long before Mikhail Gorbachev or the rise of the 21st century the Bible taught us to love one another and Jesus modeled what it means to put value on everyone regardless of their actions

- He conversed with the woman at the well
- He ate with Matthew and his friends
- He forgave the woman caught in adultery
- He related to the thief on the cross

Paul would later add that within the church we must be careful not to divide but to express love and care for one another

All that being said, is there a time to fight?

Is there a time to stand up and say that certain things will not be tolerated?

- Your body thinks so

Viruses are infectious micro-organisms that require a living host to survive and multiply. When one enters your body, it invades and takes over cells, redirecting them to produce more of the virus. The body's natural cell reproduction is actually being used to spread the disease through the body

At that point there is little that doctors can do to treat viruses. In most cases our body's immune system fights off the virus. When the Pathogens, enter the body, the body begins to fight back. It is intolerant of these invaders because left alone they will kill the body.

In fact, disease-fighting cells are stored up in the body's immune system waiting for the time when an invasion takes place. We might say that the body is always preparing for the threat of war.

The immune system is constantly making judgments and determining which cells are good and helpful and which cells are harmful to the body.

If your immune system goes down your life will be cut short

- The founders of America thought so

Thomas Paine believed the government's sole purpose was to protect life, liberty and property, and that a government should be judged solely on the basis of the extent to which it accomplishes this goal.

He saw a monarchy as a violation of the law of God that demanded men to be considered equals

Thoughts like these spawned the American Revolution

- The generation of Americans before us thought so

6.3 million young Americans volunteered for the armed services during WW2 (my dad was one of them, although he was discharged when they discovered he was only 17)

They were not fighting to further American soil but to stop the spread of fascism

- Families think so

When parents work long hours to provide a home and stable life for their children or put away funds to secure their future

When they do the difficult task of stepping in when a child begins to become wayward as a result of a relationship or group of friends

Clearly there are things worth fighting for

And the same is true of a congregation

Like the human body, the congregation must fight off pathogens that threaten the health of the congregation

False prophets, false teaching and idolatry would be destructive to Israel so it must be stopped

Moses warned Israel of the danger of false prophets, teachers and false gods

Deuteronomy 13:1-2

“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’

Deuteronomy 13:5

But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the

land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

Deuteronomy 18:20

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

Deuteronomy 13 Goes on to address exactly what Israel is facing in Joshua 22

Deuteronomy 13:12-18

"If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the Lord your God gives you to dwell in, saying, "Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods" '—which you have not known— then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock—with the edge of the sword. And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the Lord your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again. So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers, because you have listened to the voice of the Lord your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you today, to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord your God.

False teaching is dangerous because it leads people away from God, into idolatry and bad behavior, which in turns puts the people of God under the chastising of God

Joshua 22:15-18

Then they came to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying, "Thus says the whole congregation of the Lord: 'What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the Lord? Is the iniquity of Peor

not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed till this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, but that you must turn away this day from following the Lord? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the Lord, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel.

The iniquity of Peor refers to the false prophet Balaam and his instructions to Balak to send young women into Israel's camp to entice the people into idolatry. He suggested that when they turned from God they would no longer rest under His blessing or protection.

24,000 people lost their lives as a result of their idolatry

For the sake of the congregation, Israel must respond to false teaching

Not every lesson Israel learned has a counterpart for the church. But this one does

False teaching is a threat to the church

CH Spurgeon

"I am no man's enemy, but I am the enemy of all teaching which is contrary to the Word of God."

Michael Yousseff

"For the last 2,000 years the church has been plagued with heresy after heresy seeking to tame the Gospel"

A. W. Tozer wrote,

"So skilled is error at imitating truth, that the two are constantly being mistaken for each another. It takes a sharp eye these days to know which brother is Cain and which is Abel."

As a result the Bible is filled with warnings regarding false teaching

Jesus taught;

Matthew 7:15

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."

Matthew 24:4-5

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

Paul added

Acts 20:29-31

*For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in **among you**, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

And the Bible is filled with instruction regarding how to address false teaching

- First, we are to study so as to know the difference between truth and error

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Acts 17:11

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world"

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Test all things; hold fast what is good.

- Second, we are instructed no to listen to false teaching

Romans 16:17-18

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

- Thirdly, we are to Fight for the purity of the message

Jude 1:3-4

*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to **contend** earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Contend - Eli - agonizomai

To go over the top in agonizing toward

- Fourthly, Because false teaching is like cancer which spreads through the body, it must be eradicated.

2 Timothy 2:16-18

But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

- Finally, those who teach must be stopped

1 Timothy 1:3-4

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

A misunderstanding

Joshua 22:21-29

Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel: “The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know—if it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the Lord, do not save us this day. If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the Lord Himself require an account. But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, ‘In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, “What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord has made the Jordan a border between you and us, you children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the Lord.”’ So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the Lord.’ Therefore we said, ‘Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, but that it may be a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the Lord before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, “You have no part in the Lord.”’ Therefore we said that it will be, when they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, ‘Here is the replica of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between you and us.’ Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn from following the Lord this day, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the Lord our God which is before His tabernacle.”

Reuben, Gad and Manasseh claim that they are being misunderstood.

- They were not building an altar to sacrifice falsely to God or to a false god.
- Instead this altar was erected as a witness to the coming generations that the eastern tribes were part of Israel although the Jordan divided them.

This new information caused Israel to put their swords down and remain in fellowship with Reuben, Gad and Manasseh

Two thoughts

First there is a difference between false doctrine and different doctrine

Question: "What is false doctrine?"

Answer:

- Doctrine is "a set of ideas or beliefs that are taught or believed to be true."
- Biblical Doctrine refers to teachings that align with the revealed Word of God, the Bible.
- False doctrine is any idea that adds to, takes away from, contradicts, or nullifies the doctrine given in God's Word.
 - For example, any teaching about Jesus that denies His virgin birth a false doctrine, because it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture (Matt 1:18)

False doctrine is that which opposes some fundamental truth or that which is necessary for salvation. The following are some examples of false doctrine

- Anything that denies or changes the person of Jesus Christ

1 John 2:22-23

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

- Anything that distorts the gospel of grace

Galatians 1:6-8

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Much of the story line of the book of Acts has to do with the church convening to address those who suggest stipulations must be added to the gospel" the first council of the church addressed these issues

- Some examples include

1. **Universalism:** the belief that all people will be saved or that all ways lead to God and eternal life. Many who subscribe to this theology claim that, for instance, Christians and Muslim worship the same God.

To the Universalists: No one will be saved apart from Jesus Christ. Only those who choose to repent and call on the name of Jesus will have eternal life (see Acts 4:12; Matthew 25:46; Hebrews 9:27; John 14:6).

2. **The Prosperity Gospel:** the belief that God's primary concern is for believers to be healthy and wealthy. If Christians are sick, suffering, or poor, it is because of sin or a lack of faith.

To heralds of the Prosperity Gospel: Jesus promised us that we will suffer, but that He is with us and has overcome the world (see John 16:33; Romans 5:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:12; Luke 14:27).

3. **Legalism:** the improper use of the law described in Scripture to try to attain or maintain salvation. Legalism also fosters judgment of fellow Christians for not adhering to one's own ideas of holiness rather than encouraging them to imitate Christ, obeying God's standards as explicitly outlined in Scripture.

To Legalists: If righteousness were attainable through the law, Christ would not have had to die (see Matthew 7:22-23; Galatians 2:21; Romans 3:10-12, 28; James 2:10). We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ's singular work on the cross, and even this faith is a gift from God not achieved by our own efforts (see Romans 4:5; Ephesians 2:8). And we are not to judge our brothers and sisters in Christ on debatable issues (see Romans 14:1-12).

These are things the church cannot tolerate. They like Balaam's doctrine will spread like cancer

False teaching must be exposed, contradicted and guarded against

Question: What is different doctrine

Answer: Different teaching would include differing opinions or emphasis on non essential doctrines

Orthodox believers have differing opinions on

- Church government
- Timing of the rapture

- Place of Israel
- Worship styles
- And much more

These differences should not cause us to go to war with one another

We can enjoy fellowship although we have a different emphasis

A second application from the text

Reuben, Gad and Manasseh departed from the congregation choosing to put temporal desires about the purposes of God. As a result fellowship was broken between them and the nation. Rather than realizing their mistake, taking Phineas up on his offer and returning west they chose instead to build an impressive altar.

Their lives did not witness to the fact that they were walking with The Lord so they reacted an altar as a witness

What are some of the modern altars people erect to testify what their lives fail to testify

- A big Bible
- A tithe check
- A cross necklace
- A Christian tattoo

Conclusion

Joshua 22:33-34

So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, Witness, "For it is a witness between us that the Lord is God."

Convinced that the Eastern tribes were not introducing false teaching, Phineas encouraged Israel to put down their swords

This altar, never mentioned again was designed to testify of a unity that did not exist between the tribes.

The backsliding tribes did not have a part with Israel the Jordan did in fact serve as a line separating them from one another