

**Messages from the Wilderness 15 -  
No One Is Done  
Till Everyone Is Done**

1. No one is done until everyone is done.

In Numbers 13, the men sent to spy out the land were supposed to go up the northern extreme, but that did not include any territory east of the Jordan River. There was never any indication other than that Israel was supposed to enter into the land of Canaan west of the Jordan River. They knew that they were supposed to drive out the wicked inhabitants of the land. However, Reuben and Gad looked at the grazing grounds to the east and approached Moses about settling there instead of with the rest of the tribes to the west.

Num 32:1-5 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place *was* a place for cattle;

2The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying,

3Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon,

4*Even* the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, *is* a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle:

5Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, *and* bring us not over Jordan.

Now, what they were asking was not *entirely* out of line. If they had thought about it, they could have pointed out that God had promised Abraham to *ultimately* inherit a much larger portion than just the land of Canaan.

Gen 15:18-21 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

19The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

20And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

21And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

The territory God had promised stretched roughly from Egypt to half way into modern day Iraq. The immediate problem that arose was that Reuben and

Gad looked like they were repeating the problem of Numbers 13. The spies were sent ahead of going into the Promised Land. By the 10 spies' evil report, Israel refused to go. Now they were on the brink of going in again. This time it looks like Reuben and Gad are saying no. It looked like they might be refusing to join in the fight to possess the land with the other tribes. Moses called them on their apparent breach.

Num 32:6-9 And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?

7And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?

8Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land.

9For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them.

Num 32:13-15 And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed.

14And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel.

15For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

Fortunately for Reuben and Gad they were responsive to voice of Moses.

Num 32:16-19 And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones:

17But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

18We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.

19For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.

Reuben and Gad chose not to break rank but to follow the others into war until *everyone* had received their inheritance.

The great principle here is that *no* one is done their work until *everyone* is done. This was something I learned while drying the dishes. I hated the task of washing or drying the dishes. We each had to take turns and I remember thinking I could leave when my "part" was done. It was explained to me that the job was to clean the kitchen after dinner, drying the dishes was just a momentary part of cleaning the kitchen up. I *also* had to keep going until we *all* had to get the kitchen clean. We see this in the day that Hezekiah brought a great restoration of worship, except there weren't enough priests who were right with God to offer the sacrifices.

2Chr 29:34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the *other* priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites *were* more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.

I want to explain to young people that you do yourself no favors when you merely do one thing you are assigned and then find some place on the side to sit out the rest of the work. Something I did not realize until adulthood was that all the adults around you are taking notice of your lack of participation. You end up being marked as being immaturely self centered. Now some young people might protest and point out how they are willing to participate in things they *want* to do. They shouldn't be so quick to pat themselves on the back because a self-centered nature taints all that they do. Adults quickly see the times someone hangs back unless they get to do something that serves their self-interest. If you don't enter into training and deliberately exercise yourself to counteract that attitude, it will follow you into your adult years and adults are not exempt from this problem.

Reuben and Gad were responsive and the strength and effectiveness of Israel was preserved. One of the problems that churches face is that a portion of the members are not responsive and feel free to sit at home while the rest are hobbled in their work.

1Cor 12:18-26 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?

20But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.

...

24For our comely *parts* have no

need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

## 2. Covenant Community vs. Social Community

Now, there is a mistake that someone could make in their understanding of the joint effort of all the tribes. It is possible to mistake this for the power of a communal effort. There is a loose sense in which *social* communities work together. Watching out for the good behavior and safety of kids, is a fine social value. However, insisting that your neighbor adopt your political views is not cool. The more you stifle dissent and require conformity of belief the closer you are to totalitarian abuse.

The other sense of community that *is* supposed to be more restrictive is a *covenant* community. A covenant community is a community that agrees on a certain *specific set* of objectives and policies.

A social community pushes a *general* conformity while a covenant community only requires conformity on its narrowly defined objectives and policies.

Why this is important is because in God's economy, believers form a *covenant* community. No one is pressured in general to join. All who participate do so voluntarily. That is why Baptists have been at the forefront of rejecting a *state* church. Israel certainly did have a covenant relationship with God, but no one had to stay in the nation. People were free to remain in Egypt, although it was certainly foolish to do so. By being part of the covenant community they were able to leverage the effect of their mission...which is why people *form* such a community.

What binds us together is a very specifically defined mission and set of beliefs which we *voluntarily* subscribe to. This is why Ananias and Sapphira fell into judgment in the book of Acts:

Acts 4:32-37 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among

them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,

37Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

Here, the believers voluntarily entered into a covenant to hold all possessions as common. It was limited in time and scope: it was for the immediate moment and limited to their possessions and did not include some whole means of production. In the next chapter, Ananias and Sapphira came into condemnation because they broke that covenant and did *not* bring the full price of their land sale to the needs of others. We know this was limited because after this time, the principle of tithes and offerings are taught and *not* total abandonment of one's wealth. They then compounded the matter by lying about it and lost their lives.

The thing to emphasize in a covenant community is the voluntary nature of conforming to a defined creed...which is why we have a constitution and bylaws. Specifically within the constitution is a church covenant:

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and angels, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, spirituality, and power; not forsaking the assembly of ourselves together but to regularly attend the services and meetings of this church; to sustain sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to contribute by tithes and offerings cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expense of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to

religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world, to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as beverage; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember each other in prayer, to aid each other in sickness and distress, to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech, to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

This covenant is reflected when we do a child dedication. The dedication is actually a covenant for the parents and the church to work together to give a child every opportunity to know the Lord.

### 3. Leverage.

Num 32:20-27 And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war,  
21And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him,  
22And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD.  
23But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

The Reubenites and the Gadites agreed to this and said,

27But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith.

Reuben and Gad, and, later, half the tribe of Manasseh, were assigned the district of Bashan, or what is the Golan Heights today, but it was only *after* all of Israel took possession of Canaan. By working together they were able to do

what no one individual tribe could do.

Ecc1 4:9-12 Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

10For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up.

11Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*?

12And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

I was amazed to discover that by wrapping a rope around a pier just a few times would make it possible for a person by himself to hold back a ship (as long as the pier was strong enough) because the frictional forces around the pier increased exponentially with each wrap. This is the same principle at work in vs. 12. The intertwining of a third line in a cord makes the cord incredibly strong. We use vs. 12 in marriage counseling to explain that a family with a husband wife can combine the strengths of two to make a whole person when two become one. However, the third person in the marriage is the Lord. God will certainly bless and strengthen all who call upon Him, but to neglect making the Lord part of your home is foolish.

The same thing can be said for all relationships: relationships with friends, coworkers, neighbors, relatives...but especially relationships in church. You can see this problem in youth ministries. Sometimes you'll see a kid who just can't bring himself or herself to join in. They can be seen sitting off to the side, becoming a magnet to other kids to become disaffected and too cool to join in. There is a word for this...it's called being a snob. And it is not only a problem in youth. Adults can have a snob problem, too, but if you called them out on it they would be shocked. We schedule events and meetings so people can have an opportunity to fellowship. There are some genuine reasons why some cannot attend, but it should grieve us to have to miss being with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. I'm sure people are just being careless in their thinking, but we *should* care about them. It should not be the case where it depends on whether we enjoy people or not. Our Christian love loves the unlovely. Our compassion should cause us to take joy in serving others. There was a time when we had a crew of kids coming from one neighborhood who decided they didn't want to be around one girl who had a learning disability. We lost that bunch of kids because there was no way I was going to cast her out to keep them. If we *had* cast her out, we would have lost them anyway because

they would recognize hypocrisy. Later in life, even though she lives out of state, *she* is the one who faithfully calls me to wish me a Happy Birthday, Fathers Day, Easter, and Christmas and discuss spiritual difficulties and questions.

1Pet 3:8 Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous:

Jude 1:22-23 And of some have compassion, making a difference:  
23And others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Jas 2:1-4 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.

2For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

Working and growing together we become one with the power of Christ. God's goal is...

Eph 4:12-16 ...the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

16From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

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2. Covenant Community vs. Social



## Community Acts 4:32-37

3. Leverage. Num 32:20-27, Eccl 4:9-12, 1Pet 3:8, Jude 1:22-23, Jas 2:1-9, Eph 4:11-16