

Messages from the Wilderness 17 – It's All in the Family

1. Every member of the family is important.

We will be looking at Numbers 36 today regarding the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad, but their situation is first addressed back in numbers 27 when they came to Moses to deal with their problem. Each of the families or tribes were to get an inheritance of land. They were concerned that because they had no sons born to Zelophehad, that there would be no inheritance for them because they were daughters.

Num 27:1-8 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these *are* the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah.
2And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, *by* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying,
3Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons.
4Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us *therefore* a possession among the brethren of our father.
5And Moses brought their cause before the LORD.
6And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
7The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.
8And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.

We know that over the centuries, that women have struggled for the recognition of how important they are. There have been varying degrees of difficulty to which they have been subjected from one culture to another throughout history. Because of this, there are some in our time who claimed that women have been treated as second class citizens in Christianity. However, God

has elevated women both in Judaism and Christianity more so than any other culture. One author has written:

Christianity has done more for women's rights than any other movement in history. Christianity sprouted in the seedbed of the Roman Empire, whose soil was nourished with the blood of the innocent. To say that Rome was distinctly anti-woman is an understatement. Families typically kept all their healthy boys and their oldest healthy girl. Other daughters were left to die as infants. Surgical abortion was available, and women often died from it or were left maimed...Christians opposed these practices. They took in abandoned infants, condemned surgical abortion, allowed girls to remain unmarried until they were ready, and provided support for widows...Also, because they accepted rather than rejected all children, Christians gained a distinct population advantage in producing the next generation.

Furthermore, Christianity's acceptance of women's dignity led to cultural innovations all over the world. In India, for example, it was only when Parliament forced the British East India Company to allow Christian missionaries into India that the practice of suttee was questioned. It took decades, but these missionaries, together with indigenous Christians like Krishna Mohan Bannerjee, eventually succeeded in having this gruesome practice banned.

In China, traditional culture held that tiny feet were a mark of status and beauty for women. In many parts of China, the feet of little girls were bound tightly to prevent them from growing. This broke the toes and bones in the arches of their feet, leaving many girls nearly crippled. In the 1600s, the Manchu emperors (who were not ethnically Chinese) tried and failed to stop the practice. In the late 1800s, however, Chinese Christian women, such as medical doctor Shi Meiyu [and Christian missionaries such as Gladys Aylward], began agitating against this abuse of young girls and women and were eventually successful in making the practice illegal. Meiyu also exerted a transformational influence on China through her work in medicine and public health and the help she provided to opium addicts.

Historically in most cultures,

women were often denied educational opportunities. Christian missionaries and indigenous Christian leaders changed that in country after country. [Nitobe Inazo lived in Japan in the early 1900s. He was a scholar] with five doctoral degrees and an innovator in Japan's agricultural advancement, founded Tokyo Christian Women's University and became its first president. Tsuda Umeko, a Japanese woman educated in the United States, became the private tutor of prime minister Ito Hirobumi's children. She had such an influence on securing the right of women to education that Tsuda College, the most prestigious private women's college in Japan, is named in her honor.¹

In the Old Testament you have prominent women such as Miriam, considered a prophetess, Deborah the Judge, Huldah the prophetess, Abigail, who married David, Rahab, and Esther. In the New Testament you find women who were in the forefront of ministering to Jesus including Mary Magdalene and Mary and Martha of Bethany. Priscilla served powerfully alongside Aquila, Lois and Eunice figured chiefly into the spiritual growth for the ministry for Timothy.

There is good reason why we celebrate Mother's Day and for blessed work that all women do in the Lord's work.

In Numbers 27, the treatment of the daughters of Zelophehad is an example of God's concern for *every* member of the family. Galatians 3:26-29 emphasizes this in the family of God.

Gal 3:26-29 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Now, male or female, we are heirs of the righteousness of faith.

Rom 4:13-16 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

¹https://www.conservapedia.com/Christianity_and_women's_rights

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16Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

2. What happens in the family stays in the family.

Now, as we come to the end of the book of Numbers, there is another aspect to the issue of inheritance regarding the daughters of Zelophehad. The Israelites were aware of the Law of the Jubilee, which occurred the year following every 49 years. In the Jubilee all lands were to be restored to the original tribes. This was easy to do in the case of males because when they married, they did not join into the tribe of their wife. However, God's plan is that a wife is joined to her husband, and so to *his* tribe. When a daughter married outside her tribe, then there would be a problem in that her inheritance would pass over to the other tribe. This would be a problem because God wanted each tribe to maintain their inheritance.

Num 36:3-4 And if they be married to any of the sons of the *other* tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance.

4And when the jubile of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.

The answer was simple, for daughters to be able to carry forward the family line, they had to marry into their own tribe (which was not a problem because the tribes were so large), otherwise, the land would be forfeited to the other tribe.

Num 36:8-10 And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers.

9Neither shall the inheritance remove from *one* tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance.

10Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of

Zelophehad:

We have skipped to the end of the book of Numbers and passed over chapters dealing with the division of the land, but this chapter on inheritance not only addresses the future of their inheritance, but also is a great way to conclude with a great principle. Numbers begins and deals with the proper place of each tribe of Israel, and it concludes with a more perfect admonition: what happens in the family stays in the family.

3. Keep it in the house.

Gal 6:9-10 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

God has given us an inheritance in Christ. We are a spiritual house.

1Pet 2:1-5 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

4To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious,

5Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

As a spiritual household that serves the Lord, we are to keep judgment in the house.

1Pet 4:17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

1Cor 6:1-6 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

2Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

4If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

5I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

6But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

It has been a blessing to watch people in the new membership class especially as we talk about the bylaws where we discuss Matthew 18:

Matt 18:15-17 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

We keep our problems in house. Even if someone refuses to cooperate and take care of any offense they have imagined, we make sure that only the church family is involved in dealing with the issue (this is done in the church business meeting where only members are allowed).

Even when people come here from another church especially if the church is not far from us, that if they have any problem that they have left unresolved in their old church that they make sure to go back and take care of it in house there

From time to time other pastors and I have had to make sure that when members are moving on and joining other churches that they are not just carrying their problems from one place to another.

There are times when I have been called upon to advise someone who belongs to another church. I always have to make sure to be very neutral and to give advice on how to properly work with their pastor and their church.

The important principle here is found in James 1:

Jas 1:19-21 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

I have found that over the years it is important to re-examine Matthew 18

because no matter how many times you present the lesson from Matthew 18 it is always sadly surprising that there are those who make the mistake of thinking that it is very harsh or even wrong to confront sin or sinful attitudes, even though they are being done privately in the steps outlined in Matthew 18.

This is why we especially started to have the new members class. We wanted to make sure that people have been able to be mentored and to discuss the method of church discipline. We want them to know that we are doing everything we possibly can to consider each other and grow together. It is really so sad to know that there are those who are firmly grounded in the household of faith while others just don't seem to be able to get it. They, in effect, treat the church of the living God as another entertainment venue. At this point I would like to challenge everyone to consider whether they truly are a disciple. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart about your noninvolvement and you should answer the call to true discipleship.

Today as we watch what is happening in America it is *not* surprising that there are those who holds the values and philosophes that would destroy our foundations of liberty and freedom and personal responsibility before God. What *is* astounding is how long violence is being tolerated and even accommodated. What *we* have is not a philosophy – it is not even a religion. It is a high calling.

Phil 3:13-16 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

15Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

16Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

It was always considered shameful to talk about problems outside of the family. One thing you didn't want was one of your kids blurting out was family business. We have an expression for this, "Don't air your dirty laundry in public." Keep it in the house.

We must see ourselves as a household of faith. I often emphasize the business management aspect of the church and how that we're partners together in the ministry. But I am often encouraged to remind people that even though we want to try our hardest to be effective in the way that we carry out the

ministry, we are also a family. So I try to incorporate the teaching that we are a business but we are a family business.

1. Every member of the family is important. Num 27:1-8, Gal 3:26-29, Rom 4:13-16
2. What happens in the family stays in the family. Num 36:3-10
3. Keep it in the house. Gal 6:9-10, 1Pet 2:1-5, 1Pet 4:17, 1Cor 6:1-6, Matt 18:15-17, Jas 1:19-21, Phil 3:13-16