

Joshua 22:1-6 • Obedience Before, During, and After

Introduction

Hey! We have here a positive, spiritual role model! It's important to look at these tribes' example to glean what we might possibly apply to our own walk, to see what it takes to have a right and faithful relationship with God. What was the nature of their commitment, how did they follow through, and how does it compare with the issues of our own faithful walk in Christ?

⁵They said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession; do not take us across the Jordan."

⁶But Moses said to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Reuben, "Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here? ⁷Now why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the LORD has given them? ⁸This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. ⁹For when they went up to the valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the sons of Israel so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them. ¹⁰So the LORD's anger burned in that day, and He swore, saying, ¹¹'None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully, ¹²except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the LORD fully.'

²⁰So Moses said to them, "If you will do this, if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for the war, ²¹and all of you armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven His enemies out from before Him, ²²and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you shall return and be free of obligation toward the LORD and toward Israel, and this land shall be yours for a possession before the LORD. ²³But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out. ²⁴Build yourselves cities for your little ones, and sheepfolds for your sheep, and do what you have promised."

[Read Numbers 32:5-12]

Review: Israel has come a second time to take possession of the Promised Land. But Reuben and Gad, seeing land desirable on **THIS** side of the Jordan, make a formal request to be granted these lands instead of an allotment with all the other tribes on the other side of the Jordan.

Q: What are the main points of Moses' objections to their request?

1. They would not have to engage in the coming war for the land, as would the rest of the tribes, since they'd already have theirs, free and clear of all enemies. (v.6)
2. This would result in a morale problem for the rest of the tribes. (v.7)
3. It appears to be the same kind of disobedience that defeated Israel the first time they came to take the Promised Land, which also incurred God's anger and judgment against them. (v.8-12)

Q: What is the contrast of the first generation that bore God's judgment to Caleb and Joshua?

A: The first generation "did not follow Me fully" (v.11), whereas Caleb and Joshua "followed the Lord fully". It's the contrast of disobedience and obedience to God.

Point: Moses is not concerned specifically about the land, but the attitude of obedience to God, of maintaining a right relationship **BOTH** with God and man.

[Read Numbers 32:20-24]

Q: What are Moses' conditions that will enable these tribes to prove the quality of their obedience?

1. They will go to war with all of Israel. (v.20-21)
2. They will finish the war entirely before returning home. (v.22)
3. To fail to do so will mean they have "sinned against the Lord" (v.23) with all of the obvious consequences.

Q: How does Moses characterize or label these conditions as accepted by the tribes?

A: "Do what you have promised". (v.24)

Application: When we came to Christ, were there promises on our part that we are obligated to keep? How are they similar to those of the tribes?

¹⁶They answered Joshua, saying, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. ¹⁸Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous.”

¹⁰For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed; ¹¹and when all the people had finished crossing, the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed before the people. ¹²The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them; ¹³about 40,000 equipped for war, crossed for battle before the LORD to the desert plains of Jericho.

¹Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ²and said to them, “You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you. ³You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. ⁴And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them; therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan.

[Read Joshua 1:16-18]

Review: *Moses had died and as Israel is about to undertake the conquest of Canaan, Joshua reminds the tribes of their promise to Moses and receives from them this response.*

Q: What is the nature of their response to Joshua?

A: A renewed promise to obedience, even to the point of themselves putting to death anyone that disobeys.

[Read Joshua 4:10-13]

Q: Who were the first to cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land, even ahead of the rest of Israel?

A: The tribes that had promised obedience to God, Moses, and Joshua.

Point: *Based on all that has taken place regarding these tribes, we can clearly see that the issue is obedience both individually and collectively, both to earthly and heavenly authorities. Like those of us coming to know Christ, they made a promise of obedience from the beginning and reaffirmed it on the eve of their service to God. Now we come to that place in Joshua 22 where we see whether or not they followed through, and what will carry them through in the future.*

[Read Joshua 22:1-4]

Q: What are the 4 obligations in v.2-3 that Joshua states the tribes have kept fully and with whom?

1. “You have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you”. (v.2) They kept their promise to Moses.
2. “...and have listened to my voice in all that I commanded you”. (v.2) They kept their re-commitment to Joshua.
3. “You have not forsaken your brothers...” (v.3) They kept their commitment to their brothers/family/nation.
4. “...have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God”. (v.3) They followed God’s ways fully.

Q: How would you assess the degree of their success AFTER having promised obedience?

A: They were 100% successful both to God and man, both to earthly and heavenly authority.

Application: *How does their obedience compare with OUR obedience? Do we pick and choose to whom we’ll submit, or do we recognize ALL of our obligation to God directly and indirectly through man? Do we see our obedience as not just a witness to God, but to our brethren and leaders as well?*

⁵Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

⁶So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

[Read Joshua 22:5-6]

Q: How is their obligation for future success equal to that of the past?

A: “Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you...” (v.5) Now that they’re going to live on their own in the land given by God, their obedience must take the shape of keeping God’s Word.

Application: To what is the obligation of our obedience even when our brethren or leaders are not present? God’s Word. How does this define our obedience—is it only in the presence of others?

Q: What are the basics of keeping God’s Word as outlined here by Joshua?

1. “...to love the Lord your God...”
2. “...walk in all His ways...”
3. “...keep His commandments...”
4. “...hold fast to Him...”
5. “...serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul”.

Point: Isn’t it interesting that the biblical definition of “love” so often comes back to being defined as the qualities of one’s obedience and service?

Overall Application

- What is the degree of your commitment to Christ? Is it just part-time, whenever you’re in church? Or was it intended from the moment of salvation to be something full-time on your part?
- Would you say that you truly “love” Christ if you don’t “walk in all His ways...keep His commandments...hold fast to Him...serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul”? Does this give you a clue as to where exactly to begin working on your love?
- Do you see this commitment to obedience of all of God’s Word—putting it into practice in your life—as not just for God’s sake but for that of our leaders and our brothers and sisters in Christ?