

12th June 2019.

BEING WARY OF STRIFE AFTER VICTORY.

Joshua 22.

Being ‘Wary’ is defined as being cautious of danger; carefully watching and guarding against deception, trickery and dangers; being suspiciously prudent. Cautious. Careful. Guarded. Are the words synonymous to it, and that’s what we are to learn about tonight.

Many times the enemy of our souls or lives shall after we’ve attained a victory and even given testimony of God’s faithfulness, seek to ruin it all by scheming against us by having us undo the victory by ourselves. Which we have to always be cautious about at such times....

Like someone getting drunk at their graduation party and thereby ruining their reputation which hinders their getting a good job, for example.

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, when the Israelites were camped by the Jordan River, poised to enter the Promised Land, the land of their destiny. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, however, chose to remain on the east side of the Jordan, because the lush land seemed like an ideal place to raise cattle.(Num. 32:32) Moses gave them permission to do so—with the stipulation that they were to join the other nine and one-half tribes in warfare. Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh agreed and fought for seven years on the west side of the Jordan until the Promised Land was conquered, though literally - not completely. As we’d left off observing with our study of chapter 21 last week.

Tonight we read in chapter 22:1-9 of their return to the land of their possession.... Please take note of Joshua’s exhortation to them in verse 5.....

Reading on we are told....vs10 – 34.....

As we we’ve seen in verses 27 and 28, the Israelites on the east side of the Jordan built an altar not for sacrifice or worship, but, rather, as a symbol of their solidarity with their brothers on the west side of the Jordan. So angered by this were their brothers on the west side, however, that civil war nearly ensued.

The nine and one-half tribes were in the Promised Land, but the enemy sought to divide them from their brothers on the other side of the Jordan. Satan's strategy is still the same: divide and conquer. His goal is always to get believers to separate, to distance, to critically analyze.

In this passage, we see four ways the nine and one-half tribes fell prey to the destructive division that almost led to civil war...

In vss 11 & 12, we see that the first step towards division was taken when the nine and one-half tribes acted on hearsay. They didn't see the altar the two and one-half tribes had built—they only heard about it. That's always how Satan begins to bring people into division and opposition. So often, divisions in families or churches are based simply on what is heard. Rumors take on a life of their own and fires are fanned when people act on hearsay.

In vss 13 & 14, we see the second mistake the nine and one-half tribes made, in that they got worked up before they checked the situation out. That is, they sharpened their swords and grabbed their shields before they established the facts. "He that answers a matter before he hears it, it is a folly and a shame unto him" (Proverbs 18:13). Making a decision without learning the whole story leads to folly and shame ultimately.

The third we see in Vss 15-18.. was using the Lord's name loosely. Which can happen to Spirit-filled believers as well. We hear something. Our righteous indignation flares up. And then we use the name of the Lord quite liberally when we say, "The Lord showed me this," or, "The Lord wants you to know that." But we must be careful. Are we sure it's the Lord? It might simply be our own opinion or perspective!

Then the fourth mistake the nine and half tribes made is seen in vss 19 & 20 where they bore false witness in accusing their brothers of rebelling against God. We usually think of bearing false witness as telling an outright lie. While it can be that, it's not limited to that. Bearing false witness also means giving the right information, but with the wrong implication.

When Jesus was being tried, false witnesses pointed to Him and said, “He said to destroy the temple and in three days, He would raise it up” (Matthew 26:60, 61). While Jesus did, in fact, utter those words, He wasn’t referring to the temple in Jerusalem, but to His own body (John 2:19–21).

Although the two and one-half tribes did indeed build an altar, it was not a sign of rebellion.

That said, however, Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh were also responsible for the division that nearly led to civil war. Why? They were on the wrong side of the Jordan River. God wanted His people on the west side of the Jordan. But the two and one-half tribes said, “No. We have business interests and family obligations, so we’ll just stay here on the east side.”

In reality, the east side of the Jordan was a place of carnality. You see, the word, carnal, simply means “fleshly.” As seen in 1 Corinthians 3, it refers to those who are interested in the seen rather than in the unseen, in the material rather than in the spiritual, in the temporal rather than in the eternal. How do you know when you’re carnal? How do you know that, although you’re part of God’s family and part of the kingdom, you’re on the wrong side of the Jordan? In the response of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, we see three indications of the state of the heart of one who is carnal...

In vs 21-24, When they were accused and challenged by the other tribes for building an altar, the two and one-half tribes said, “The Lord knows.”

This is what carnal people often say. “Don’t judge me,” says the carnal believer. “God knows my heart.” Yes, God does know our hearts. The problem is, we don’t. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Jeremiah asks. (Jer.17:9). We can’t know our own heart—but the Word of God can because it is a “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Therefore, it doesn’t matter what your heart tells you. It matters what God’s Word declares.

Vs 25a, has them point out that.....

Which is the second indication, in that carnal people blame the Lord either directly or indirectly for any given problem.

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh blamed the Lord for the division. Carnal people blame the Lord—and sometimes others—for their own sins and shortcomings.

“It was because of the woman You gave me that I sinned,” Adam said to God as an excuse for his own rebellion (Gen.3:12).

And vs 25b, like above has it that.....

In that carnal people blame their family problems on churches or other believers. Blaming the church is always an indication of carnality. “If your children were better behaved, our children wouldn’t be rebellious,” says the carnal parents. It is the mature believer who understands that it’s not up to the church, the government or the school system to raise his children. It’s up to him. When his children struggle, it’s the mature believer who says, “Lord, I have an urgent issue. Show me what I need to do.....”

Finally, in vss 26-28 we see that the carnal believers say, “I’m going to worship how I want to worship, where I want to worship, in the way I want to worship.” When they said.....

God never told the two and one-half tribes to build an altar. He wanted His people to gather around the single altar of the tabernacle. As we studied in the luganda service on Sunday from Leviticus 17, but the two and one-half tribes did it their way.

The same is still true today. Carnal Christians say, “I can worship just as well out at home by radio or TV as I can in church.” The Word, however, clearly says, “Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25) and “Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133:1).

The nine and one-half tribes were in error because, in righteous indignation, they wanted to correct their brothers before they understood the problem. However, the two and one-half tribes were also in error because, by remaining on the east side of the Jordan, they placed themselves in a position to be misunderstood.

The lesson for us is clear. You who are spiritual, you who love the Lord and are walking with Him, be careful that in your Spirit-filled desire for rightness, you don’t judge and criticize those on the other side of the river. The enemy would love to see you at odds with your brothers and sisters, waging war against them, critical of them, losing patience with them.

In Galatians 6:1, we read, “Brethren, if any of you be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual”—which means Spirit-filled people —“restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.”

If you’re carnal, be cautioned. If you say, “I like being on the edge. I don’t want to get too radical,” be cautioned because Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh were the first people to be led hundreds of miles across the desert when the Assyrians attacked the nation of Israel and led them into captivity. Also Lot’s going close to Sodom got him loose his family and heritage.

If you’re a carnal believer, understand that, although you’ll go to heaven ultimately, you’ll experience unnecessary heartbreak and agony before then because the wages of sin is still and always death (Rom.6:23).

This altar was meant to be a witness to the unity of the twelve tribes.

Jesus said that the witness of our unity as the body of Christ—is love. The world will know we’re believers not by our bumper stickers or the size of the Bible we carry. “They’ll know you are My disciples,” Jesus said, “by your love” (John 13:35).

“Father, let them be one that the world might know that I am in You and You are in Me,” Jesus prayed (John 17:21).

We get to love people and love each other. Love is the key. Love is our witness. Where is unity found? At the altar of the Cross of Calvary. It is neither our eschatology nor our any-ology—that make us one. We are one because we all believe in the same Lord. We eat of His body. We drink of His blood. Unity is found at the foot of the Cross, at the altar called Calvary. Whether regarding division among family members, churches, or brothers and sisters in the congregation, unity is found only at the altar where the Lamb was slain for you and me.

The enemy wants to cause believers to wage war with each other. Be warned. Be wise. And just love people in Jesus’ Name.