

"Resignation is surrender to fate; acceptance is surrender to God."

- Elizabeth Elliott

Please allow that to resonate in your thinking for just a moment.

... ..

Sometimes we can be so overwhelmed by our circumstances... that we simply become resigned to them. "Oh well... there is nothing I can do about it..." I don't like getting old... not having as much energy... having a lot more aches and pains... but there is nothing I can do about it. I'll live with it. I just have to accept it..." ... "I really don't like my job. I've been stuck in it for years. ... But it pays the bills..." ... "My family drives me crazy... but they are my family..." ... "Contemporary society is getting worse and worse. Morality and decency are gone. Government is corrupt... colleges and universities shred every inch of our moral fiber... and the economy is in the tank. But that's just the way things are, until something changes..."

After the statement by Elizabeth Elliott... *"Resignation is surrender to fate; acceptance is surrender to God,"* She continued... "Resignation lies down quietly in an empty universe. Acceptance rises up to meet the God who fills that universe with purpose and destiny. Resignation says, 'I can't,' and God says, 'I can.' Resignation says, 'It's all over for me.' Acceptance asks, 'Now that I'm here, Lord, what's next?' Resignation says, 'What a waste.'" Acceptance says, 'In what redemptive way can you use this mess, Lord?'"

Last week we initiated a new study through another Book of the Bible. We opened the book of Joshua by studying its first nine verses of chapter one.

We saw... last week that Israel was faced with a looming challenge. They would either be... resigned... or be accepting. ... Moses... their leader for 40 years... the only leader they had ever known... had just died. ... Chapter one of Joshua says 4 times – “Be strong and courageous.” ... No doubt many of Israelites were choosing “resignation.”

They camped just outside the borders of the Promised Land that God was giving to them... but the Jordan River... about as massive as the mighty Mississippi River... (even larger than the Columbia which separates our State from Washington State)... this massive river lay between them and their land. ... Occupying the land were well-established people... with fortified walls... and fierce armies who were well-trained... well-equipped... and well-endowed giants who had a lot of battle experience. Israel did not have ANY of those advantages. ... It looked like a much bigger blowout than the NBA Playoffs between the Portland Trailblazers and the San Antonio Spurs. ... But far more devastating and consequential!

Just before going into the land... Joshua had to confront... yet another possible situation for resignation. This one would certainly defeat them before they even got started.

Before we get to our passage of study for this morning... let me fill you in on the background to it... by having you first turn to Numbers... chapter 32. ...And as we go back... just a little in time... when Moses was still alive... and the Israelites were coming to the place where they are now camped on the banks of the Jordan River... Two kings... King Og of Bashan... and King Sihon of the Amorites... had attacked the Israelite stragglers... those who were elderly and sick... and who were not able to travel well enough to

keep up with the main group. ... The army of Israel turned around and the Lord gave Israel a complete victory. Now... suddenly Israel has won some beautiful land... on the East side of the Jordan. They now own land East of the Promised Land. It had been known as the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead.

Numbers 32:1-5

2 ½ tribes of Israel had come to the very edge of the Promised Land... and they were resigned. They were not accepting of all God wanted to give them. *“This is good enough... We can raise our livestock just fine right here! Let us go no further!... We are content to stay and live in this nice place.”*

Numbers 32:6-27

All of this had happened... just before Moses died. But now that Moses is gone... will these 2 ½ tribes keep the agreement they made with Moses...?

- Joshua had some doubt.

Joshua is ready now to lead Israel into the promised land... but if the Ruebenites... the Gadites... and the ½ tribe of Manasseh with their 136,000 fighting men... that they had available... many who were Israel's elite forces... if they had become resigned again... it would deflate the entire effort. ... Everyone in the whole camp of Israel would be instantly discouraged... before the campaign had begun.

It is time to mobilize all of God's people. Joshua's mobilizing would include two messages... which are the subject of our passage today. The first message was for the executive officers of Israel... and the other message

was for these 2 ½ tribes whose homes were given to them... on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

One last reminder before we read today's passage. ... Joshua is one of the most fascinating books of the Bible. ... On one level it relates the historical account of an ancient Hebrew leader... and the people God called him to lead into the Promised Land. ... But on another level it's a personal story of promise... of the great expectations that God has for each one of **us**. ... God calls each of us to enter the land... to claim a life of adventure lived by faith... experiencing spiritual victory. ... But sadly... many Christians are resigned to stay on the Eastern side of the Jordan... and not enter the land.

The powerful, faithful Jehovah God is promising to make us what He wants us to be. ... He is committed to us; it's an absolute certainty. ... In Joshua 1:9 God said at the conclusion of last week's passage, "*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed; for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*"

Joshua 1:10-18

The Lord had spoken to Joshua. Now Joshua was to speak to the people, which he did without delay. As soon as God gave the commission, Joshua began to mobilize the Israelites for conquering Canaan. ... Joshua's promptness was like David who said,

Psalm 119:60 (ESV)

I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.

Once you and I know what God wants us to do... we need to act on it immediately. ... So often we fool ourselves into thinking that it is more complicated than it really is. ... But neglecting to do God's will... is where the complications will intensify.

Forty years before, at Kadesh Barnea, the nation had known the will of God but refused to obey it. In fact they stood on these very banks... where they are now... and looked into the Promised Land that God wanted to give them. ... So... why did they refuse to do the will of God? ... Because they believed the report of the ten spies instead of believing the commandment of God and obeying by faith. ... Had they listened to Caleb and Joshua — and (LISTEN) Caleb and Joshua gave the minority report — they would have spared themselves those difficult years of wandering in the wilderness.

There is a place in Christian service for seeking input and advise from others... but a majority consensus ended up wrong... time and time again in the Bible. ... A committee report is no substitute for the clear commandment of God. ... I cannot recall a single instance in all of Scripture where a survey of the people yielded a decision that was God's will. Often it goes against it... like when Moses was writing down God's commands on Mt. Sinai and when Moses was later than they expected... the consensus of the people was to forget Moses and his God... and to make a golden calf to worship instead.

This is why... I believe Paul told Timothy to select godly men from the church at Ephesus... men who could discern what the will of God is for their church... and put them in leadership as Elders... or as Christ's under-

shepherds to enact the will of Christ in the church. It is why we are an elder-led church... and we plead with you to pray for the elders to hear Christ correctly... and make His will priority over everything else. Joshua had courage to act immediately on the will of God. Pray that your elders will have this same kind of courage... and discernment.

Joshua 1:10-11

The word "*provisions*" means food. Here it means *food of any kind*, but especially animal food. It is therefore obvious that the miraculous supply of manna was soon to cease... so the Israelites needed to have some food on hand for arrival in Canaan. ... The order to prepare provisions was a promise the Israelites would move into the land.

I think that it is very interesting... that instead of the command to prepare food... I might have expected Joshua to say... "*Start preparing some rafts and boats so we can get all our people and animals across this massive river...*" I think I could have expected someone to stop me in my instructions to gather food... by saying... "*Joshua... why are we gathering food... when we don't even know how we are going to get across yet... Let's keep first things – first, Joshua... Figure out how we get there... THEN take care of this matter about our sustenance...*"

But Joshua didn't try to second-guess God and work things out for himself. Neither did he demand that God answer all of his questions, first. Joshua knew that the God Who opened the Red Sea... could also open the Jordan River. ... He and Caleb had been present... when God parted those waters and delivered the nation from Egypt. ... They had confidence that God would work on their behalf again.

Notice also... that Joshua's words to his leaders were words of faith and encouragement. "You shall pass over! You will possess the land! The Lord is going to give it to you!" ... Joshua had made a similar speech forty years before... but that generation of leaders wouldn't listen. ... Now that generation was dead... and the new generation was ready to believe God and conquer the land.

Joshua 1:12-14

Reading from here into the book of Judges... the rest of the Old Testament... and even into the New Testament... we can see what a mistake it was for these tribes to stay on the east side of the Jordan River. Being so far away from Jerusalem... and the Temple... they were usually the first to wander away from their faith... to worship false gods... AND to be carted away by Israel's enemies. Assyria... for example... came and got them first. ... In the New Testament... when Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes... these were the descendants of those tribes. ... And how do we find them when Christ gets there...? They were pig farmers! ...Something definitely forbidden by Judaism. They had strayed far from the worship and practices of the other tribes.

Many commentators of Scripture like to point out how these 2 ½ tribes so adequately describe carnal Christians of our day. ... They ought to enter the rest that God has for us in the center of His will... but instead they are resigned to stay where they are. How were they like a carnal Christian?

1. They chose their land because it appealed to the eyes.
2. They were concerned about the physical instead of the spiritual. The land was well watered and rich in timber and grazing land. They

got ahead of God, however, and were not willing to wait for His choice for them. They wanted immediate satisfaction and fulfillment.

3. They had a taste for this world and were eventually ensnared by it.

4. They wanted to live on the border as close to victory as possible, but not part of it. They picture someone trying to serve two masters. They are a picture of borderline believers.

Carnal Christians live according to the dictates of the flesh... not the spirit. They are spiritually defeated or weak. ... The book of Judges states that these people did not drive out their enemies. ... These tribes depict how weak carnal Christians are... as they were the first of all the tribes taken into captivity. ... Carnal Christians are spiritually weak. They experience greater struggles with the snares of sin. ... It's not so much how a person begins their Christian life... but how they end it. ... Reuben... Gad... and the ½ tribe of Manasseh started good... and then flopped.

To jump ahead a bit... the two and a half tribes will keep their promise to help conquer the land... but they won't be whole-hearted in their participation. ... They had 136,000 fighting men available for battle... and in verse 14 Joshua asks them to send all their fighting men... to fight on the other side of the river. ... But do you know how many of them actually went...? ... Only 40,000 men really crossed the Jordan to fight in the Promised Land. (AGAIN) Joshua asked for all of their fighting men... but as Joshua 22 informs us... more than twice as many who went... 96,000 – (nearly 100,000 soldiers) **stayed home** ... to protect the women and children and flocks and the cities they already possessed. ... So they were less than “half-hearted” about their commitment. That is exactly like a carnal Christian! They get very close to the bountiful inheritance that God

has for them... but they become resigned... they settle for making a living... instead of a life. ... They are willing to serve the Lord half-heartedly... make a show... just enough to get by... of spiritual looking activity.

And look at the enthusiasm they displayed!

Joshua 1:17-18

Now to be fair... most of the commentaries I was reading point out that verses 17 and 18 is the collective response of ALL the nation's leaders... not just the 2 ½ tribes.

So... for the most part... Joshua found what he needed... even though perhaps some were not being completely honest. ... Joshua is mobilizing the nation to enter... using encouragement. Their response shows that they were encouraged... and it must have... in turn... been an encouragement to Joshua.

Certainly compared to the conduct of their fathers whose bodies lay in the desert wilderness... their response, here... and future conduct was far better. In fact... to read through Numbers... we would see how the wilderness wanderings had less and less rebellion against Moses and the Lord... than when they first started out. Israel was ready and seemingly unified.

The first step toward winning the battle and claiming our inheritance is to let God encourage us... and then for us to encourage others. A discouraged army is never victorious... and this should be a MAJOR take-home for us... Let me give you three take-aways from today's passage:

#1. Did you come here today to be encouraged for winning battles... and to encourage others...? ... If you did... it should affect the conversations you are going to have with people... before you leave. AND if the majority of us came here with this mindset... and come every week with it... we can expect to see a lot more victories in our midst.

#2. In verse 17... we do see a condition from the people. This is a condition that I think we ought to have on the leadership of our church. You see... they were willing to follow Joshua... if he showed clear evidence that he was being led by God.

Pick elders who you have confidence in... that they are led by God. AND THEN – with unity that encourages... rise up and follow them wholeheartedly... as they follow Christ.

The final phrase of verse 18... “Only be strong and courageous” – would be like a pat on the back to Joshua – “Go to it!” They did not grumble to him and criticize him... as many Israelites had done so often with Moses.

Would you do the same for the leaders of your church...? Pray that we would be strong and courageous.

#3. I am asking you today NOT to be resigned. Being resigned is living as a carnal Christian. It doesn't accept what God has for us.

What would really satisfy us would be a God who said of anything we happened to like doing, "What does it matter so long as they are contented?" We want, in fact, not so much a Father in Heaven as a grandfather in heaven—a senile benevolence who, as they say, "liked to see young people enjoying themselves," and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, "a good time was had by all."

—C. S. Lewis

God does have a Promised Land for you and I. But it takes a courageous faith to be led into it. We can be resigned... or we can be accepting.

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- Elizabeth Elliott