"Does God Really Care About OUR Concerns?"

Numbers 36

As we finish the book of Numbers this morning let's think back to Ch. 1. In Ch. 1 God prepares Israel for getting into the land. He commands a census to be taken of all the men 20+ who will be the army. They will need to fight once they get into Canaan. The army numbers 603,550.

After many more instructions, Israel departs Mt. Sinai and heads towards the Promised Land. After complaining about lack of water, lack of food, Moses, Aaron and anything else they can think of, Moses sends 12 spies into Canaan who discover the land is exactly as God described. But they discourage the people by describing the Canaanites as 'giants', causing the people to be afraid and refuse to go in. God declares that all 603,550 fighting men will now die over the next 38 years (minus Joshua & Caleb). Then in Num. 26, we jump ahead to the 40th year. 603,548 men have all died and God says to Moses count the new army. There are 601,730. Almost the same number. When you assume each man was married with at least 1 child, that means 2 million people, if not 3 million or more.

And yet the book ends focusing on 5 fatherless, single sisters who want to obey God's Words.

In these last 3 chapters, Israel is getting ready to cross the Jordan to go into Canaan. In Ch. 34 we read about how God will meet their needs by dividing the land among the 12 tribes (3+ million people). Ch. 35 talks about how God will meet the needs of the Levites, who are to spread out over 48 cities where they will live and work and teach God's Word. Now we end the book looking at how God will meet the needs of even five fatherless, single girls while protecting the rights of one tribe. No matter how many believers are in the world, God knows our particular need and wants us to trust Him always.

Especially when we have a problem. Whether it's 3 million of His people or 5 young ladies, God cares about each one of His people. And whenever we have a problem…

Problem: Where Will We Find the Answers? (36:1-4)

… to resolve our problem. The five daughters of Z approached Moses and the leaders back in Ch. 27, explaining to them that since their father died (one of the 603,550) and they had no brothers, that the land their father would have inherited will now be lost, since the son would have inherited it. Moses inquires of God and God states that the father's inheritance will go to the girls when they marry. Case closed.

But that ruling now brings up another problem. Zelophehad was a descendant of Gilead who are part of Manasseh. They approached Moses and said, if Z's daughters marry outside their tribe, won't the land go to the male's lineage? If that happens, then our tribe will lose some of its inheritance. And the same could be true for all the tribes. So then they go – as we should go when we have problems

To godly people who go to God's Word (vv.1-2)

We should go to God's Word ourselves but not every little problem we have in life comes with a chapter and verse in the Bible. Yet the Bible does say in 2 Pet. 1:3

[3] His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

So I believe the Bible gives us the wisdom to sort out our problems through the principles in its pages. Moses always went to God for these kinds of things. While we're not given the details of him approaching the Tabernacle (as we read in Ch. 27), He does tell us he had an answer from God in v.5. Godly people go to God's Word to find wisdom, direction and solutions to life's challenges. And prayer would also be part of going to God for our answers. And we often invite those close to us as well to pray.

When the Gileadites approached Moses and explain to him how they might lose parts of their inheritance, they mention the Jubilee year. The Jubilee Year was every 50th year, and any land sold (because of debt problems) to another Israelite before then, gets returned to its original owner, debt free. But in Z's case, the land was not sold so it wouldn't return to the Manassehites. They take the time to explain the situation and present a scenario that had not been thought through. This could create a lot of future problems.

Godly people are wise because they want to resolve the issue with other godly people, seeking God's answer

Through healthy conversations about challenging issues (vv.3-4)

None of us enjoys confrontation, but sometimes it is necessary to resolve a problem, find a solution or understand a situation. If we approach it with a healthy, 'Can you help me understand what happened here?' or 'I don't know how to proceed in this dilemma I have' attitude, then we can prayerfully resolve the situation. And yet, how often do we keep it to ourselves and get upset or anxious, imagining worst-case scenarios, that of course never come true if we were to have this conversation? Thankfully the leaders of Gilead approach Moses with the problem, and Moses approaches God for an answer and not surprisingly, Moses receives

A Solution: What Does God's Word Say? (36:5-9)

God agrees that this is a concern so He gives Moses instructions on how to resolve this matter and other similar situations should they arise. How did the Gileadites and Moses come to this solution?

They listened to God and to godly people (v.5)

Moses inquires of God and hears what He says. Moses then relays what God said to others, who also listen to what Moses says. Later the daughters will listen too. Listening. Why is that so hard for us to do? We live in a retaliatory world where listening is almost non-existent. We just want our say. How often aren't we in a conversation and not really listening because we're waiting for that person to take a breath so we can get our 5 cents in. I was listening to an interview with Richard Foster this week. Richard Foster wrote many books on the spiritual disciplines, most notably The Celebration of Discipline, Prayer, still a best seller. Ten years ago he had intentionally stopped public ministry, stopped speaking and preaching tours so that others could rise up and take his and Dallas

Willard's place. When asked what he would say to us today on how to grow spiritually, he said, 'Stop talking and listen more. We don't always have to have the last word.'

AI is not helping us listen more. AI lures us away from listening and studying on our own. We open a half page document and a pop up says, 'Do you want AI to summarize this for you?' It's only half a page!! It's robbing us of healthy communication and learning.

How often aren't we told in Scripture to wait on the Lord. To listen for where and how He's working around us. Moses listened to God and the leaders wanted an answer from God. We won't solve our problems without listening to God and each other. They sought God's answer, they listened to God and not surprisingly the answer He gave was fair and gracious because

God's ways are fair and gracious (vv.6-9)

God's solution is that the daughters can marry anyone they prefer (since they have no father of brother to arrange a marriage) however, so that the land stays within the Manassehite tribe, they must marry within the tribe. Later in 36:11 it says they married their uncle's sons, but uncle is a vague term that means relative. Zelophehad had 5 brothers, so even if that was the case there were numerous options. This is what God instructed and all agreed that it was wise and fair.

Sometimes God's Word gets a bad wrap, that His people are restricted and limited because there are things that God doesn't want us to do. But God is our heavenly Father who knows what's best for us and if He says don't do something trust Him that His reasons are wise and gracious. God says sin is what limits you and makes you a slave whereas obedience to God results in freedom and joy. But that's the test for us. When we go to the Word and we get a solution to our problem from God

The Outcome: Can We Trust God? (36:10-13)

Does God have our best interests in mind? If we do what He says is it the right solution? It always is but that doesn't mean it's an easy choice. Saying yes to God means saying no to what the culture around us says is right. God has a far better perspective than we do. He sees ahead and knows what the consequences of obedience or disobedience will be. Isaiah 55:9

6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. 8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Obeying God's Word is always a test of our faith. Do we believe God's ways are better than ours? Often we obey by faith not knowing what will come about yet but knowing His plan is better than ours and will meet our needs.

The 5 daughters accept what God says and do what God says. They marry within the family so that their inheritance stays within the Manassehite tribe. When we obey God

Glorify God through <u>obedience</u> (vv.10-12)

People sometimes ask us why we make the choices we do. Often we can point them to our faith in God through Jesus. This is what the apostle Peter was getting at when he instructs us in 1 Pet. 3:13

13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Sometimes our choices conflict with the culture around us and Lord-willing, people ask why we make the choices we do. And that gives us an opportunity to glorify God. To point people to God and Jesus and their Word for the reasons why we choose to live obediently to His principles that can conflict with the culture around us. Obedience is about doing what God says and helps us make our life about Him. And when we obey we confirm for ourselves again, that

God & His Word are completely <u>reliable</u> (v.13)

13 These are the commands and regulations the Lord gave through Moses to the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.

All the Word is the Lord's commands to us to obey which will result in a more satisfying life. I love these words from Ps. 16:11 when David said of God in his day,

11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

What was the path of life God made known to David and Israel? Believe in Me, trust my Word and obey it. And when we do, we experience joy in God's presence – now – because God comes to dwell in us through His Spirit, as well as eternal pleasures at God's right hand when we will be in His presence.

Faith in God through Jesus Christ results in the assurance of hope now and forever. I trust you have placed your life in Jesus' hands. God sent Him to become human, yet He never sinned. He was falsely accused of sinning [claiming to be God, which he was), for which He was killed. But since Jesus never sinned, His death was not because of sin (like us) but for our sins. He proved His sinlessness by rising from the dead, showing that death has no power over Him. When we confess we are sinners and deserving of death, placing our trust in Jesus we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal hope. This is the path to life everlasting. It starts here with real joy and continues forever in God's presence on a new earth.

The Book of Numbers ends on a positive note. The 5 daughters of Z obey God. God cares about the needs of every one of us no matter how big or small our concern is. One detail I left out was that these 5 daughters names are repeated, Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, three times in Numbers and once in Joshua. Why do we need to hear their names each time? To remind us that God knows all of us. Each of us matters to Him. When we have problems and go to Him He will direct us to Himself. We need to obey.

The other reason I believe is that all 5 daughters names end in 'yah'. Yah is an abbreviation for God's Name Yahweh. All 5 of these girls were named as a reminder that Yahweh is the only God and He's their God. I pray God is Your God as well, that Jesus is Your Saviour and that when people hear

yours and my name, they associate us by our relationship to God because we go to Him all the time looking to obey His instructions.

Heb. 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net