

Lesson 10 Article

Earnestly desire peace - We are not naturally people of peace. We come into this world with a sinful nature that puts us at odds with God and often at odds with others. But our God is a God of peace. Through the redeeming work of his Son, the Lord Jesus, God brings us into a state of peace with himself. He also gives us peace within. The people of God are, therefore, to be people of peace, and any failure in that area is a denial of the gospel we profess to revere. Nothing so hinders the progress of the gospel as lack of peace among God's people, and nothing so promotes it as warm-hearted unity.¹

Don't assume- How often we think we know the motives of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and how often we are wrong! Instead of passing judgment on others' motives, we would do well openly and honestly to speak to them about any of their acts that concern us. A little honest talking often prevents a lot of heartache!

Peter Jeffery perceptively writes,

Innocent actions can be misconstrued, exaggerated and blown up out of all proportion. Sometimes we misrepresent the action of a fellow believer because we do not like that person and are only too glad for an opportunity to criticize. That is evil and wicked. Sometimes we misrepresent an action because we disagree with it. That is dishonest because the motives can be right even when the action is wrong.

The Israelites were too quick to misconstrue and much too quick to be ready to fight, but we must pay tribute to them that before they did anything they sent representatives to talk with their brethren. When they came face to face and talked the whole business through the problems were resolved.²

There's no question that Canaan was God's appointed land for His people; anything short of Canaan wasn't what He wanted for them. The two and a half tribes made their decision, not on the basis of spiritual values, but on the basis of material gain; for the land east of the Jordan was ideal for raising cattle. I'm reminded of the decision Lot made when he pitched his tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13:10–11). In both instances, the people walked by sight and not by faith.

By making this decision, the people of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh divided the nation and separated themselves from the blessings of the land of Canaan. They were farther away from the tabernacle and closer to the enemy. They became what I call "borderline believers." You'll recall that Egypt represents the world and Canaan the believer's inheritance in Christ. The wilderness wanderings represent the experience of believers who don't enter by faith into the *rest* God has for them (Heb. 3–4). The two and a half tribes portray believers who have experienced the blessings and battles of Canaan—their inheritance in Christ—but prefer to live on the border, outside God's appointed place of blessing.

"Faith can never be satisfied with anything short of the true position and portion of God's people," wrote C.H. MacIntosh in his *Notes on Numbers*. "An undecided, half-and-half Christian is more inconsistent than an open, out-and-out worldling or infidel" (pp. 457, 460).²

¹ Ellsworth, R. (2008). *Opening up Joshua*. Opening Up Commentary (107–108). Leominster: Day One Publications.

² Jeffery, p. 113.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong*. "Be" Commentary Series (137–138). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.