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## "Bring Us Not Over Jordan"

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*"Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan" (Numbers 32:5).*

That is the request of two-and-a-half tribes, the tribes of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. It takes you right to the heart of this extraordinary phase of Israel's history. It is quite impossible to study the whole subject of God's plan for Israel without seeing beyond a shadow of a doubt that God's purpose for Israel was that they should as a whole, in entirety go over Jordan and possess the land. That was His covenant with Abraham, confirmed to Isaac and Jacob. The whole programme of God for Israel lay inside of Canaan, over Jordan.

We have already seen in our previous studies in the book of Joshua and the letter to the Ephesians the spiritual significance of this history. Canaan, bounded by Jordan, clearly represents the life of fulness in Christ, and Jordan represents the Cross of Christ, as it invariably through the Bible marks that clear, distinct division between the old life, where self, the flesh, the world are still uncrucified and characterised by defeat; and the new life, where God Himself is supreme in the midst of His people, characterising their life by victory and enrichment.

Now, that being the historical event with its spiritual interpretation, we come up against this - that the two-and-a-half tribes decided not to go over Jordan into Canaan. "Bring us not over Jordan" is their request to Moses and the other leaders of the people. In effect they were saying, "We don't

want absolute separation unto God. We don't want all that is involved in this aggressive programme. We are not prepared to risk all that is implied by going over into the land to subdue it for God. We are not prepared for that programme, that aggressive life, that life which you call fulness of life. We have found a certain satisfaction this side of Jordan, we have found here a good deal that is good, a great deal that satisfies us. We are quite content with the life we have this side of Jordan, without driving this distinct barrier of the Cross between. There are risks involved, possessions, children, etc.". So they would live their lives there and not risk the dangers and the sacrifice which seemed clearly to be involved in this aggressive programme.

What did it all amount to? Well, it amounted to this - they were prepared to go so far, but no further. They were prepared to be reckoned in with Israel, but they were not prepared to accept the entire programme. They had world desires, a limited salvation and experience. "Bring us not over." Moses used the words, "have not wholly followed the Lord." That is the point of the division; that is the mark which runs between the two-and-a-half tribes and the remainder; that is the line drawn between those who lived on the edge of the wilderness and those who had gone over Jordan, the question as to whether they would or would not wholly follow the Lord.

Now the meaning as regards the rest of Israel: the position was parallel with the position of a proceeding generation, when they rejected the report of Joshua and Caleb. Moses says, "This is rebellion against the purpose of God, a reservation in your acceptance of the divine programme. It is not only in yourselves, but see what it means to the rest. They will lose heart, they will say, 'Here is Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh having a good time without any fighting.'" If they had followed their example, Canaan would never have been conquered. Canaan would never have become the land by which the revelation of God would be given to the world. Moses saw the peril for all the people of God and all the purposes of God. "No man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself." Bound up in your attitude to the revealed will of God is the life of another or many others.

Then there was a compromise made. It looks as if it was a perfectly satisfactory one, but you have got to read the story in the light of later history. "Well, we will leave our cattle, our flocks, our possessions, our wives and children here. We will arm ourselves and go over before Israel and help them, and help them into the land, and then we will go back again." You see the distinction between certain things. "We will help you, but we will not identify ourselves with you. We will recognise your programme, but we will not identify ourselves with it. Not that we would do it ourselves, but we will do it for you. Our hearts are not in this thing, we are not abandoned to it, but we are prepared to stand by, place our services at your disposal, but we are not with you." So they would do everything to help, but for the rest of their lives they were back there with their flocks and their children. Their heart was with their treasure, not in the real purpose of God.

There are plenty of people like that today, prepared to help in the work of God, associate themselves in the programme of the Kingdom. They come to God for their salvation, they have a share in the work, but they are not in it utterly, they are not in it because they cannot keep out of it. Their hearts are somewhere else, because their treasure is somewhere else. They are not prepared at all costs to risk all their possessions for the Kingdom. They cannot accept the Cross and all it demands, to live or to die, to sacrifice to the last degree, that the Cross may be vindicated utterly; they are not in it like that.

A compromise was made. What did it result in? Division. That spiritual breach between them, for all time. It was seen in the schismatic altar. There was a breach between them. How true it is in the

Church, in Christian work. There we are, all together, apparently, on the surface, working for the same ends, in the same big thing.

But we know that clean through the centre is a spiritual division. They are not in this thing by absolute identification with the Cross as represented in Jordan. There is that which marks a division and some live this side of the Cross and only accept a certain limited interpretation, and others accept it in its full meaning. It created a spiritual severance which for all time meant a strain of relationship. It only commenced there. That was the first thing, and a terrible thing. What else happened? It meant that the two-and-a-half tribes went into spiritual decay. Of them it was true, "He gave them their request but sent leanness into their souls." If we choose deliberately to accept only a part of the divine programme, we are just tying a knot in the artery of our spiritual blood, we are cutting clear across our full development in the will and purpose of God, holding up all God means for us, we become spiritually lean, we do not become effective, our life does not tell with a mighty sledge hammer blow.

Such people with their self-centred life will not commit themselves beyond a certain point. "No," they say, "we will not go further with you. We won't become singular. We object to the emergency element. Let us be sane, well-balanced, have nothing out of the ordinary in our Christianity." How this talk deceives the people who use it. It really means, "We won't have the whole purpose of God, we won't go all the way."

"He gave them their request." These are the lean souls, not growing fat with the good things of the Kingdom. There is no victory element in their life, there is no executive authority in their Christianity, no standing in the sovereign power of God and dominating the situation.

What about the ultimate issue? Deborah has no praise, but only scorn and reproach for them in her song. They missed the best. They were the first to go into captivity to Assyria. In the day when the storm came, they first went into exile, first came under the full blow of the enemy. It is always like that. When the stress of adversity comes, when circumstances or situations arise which are calculated to upset your Christian experience, it is the borderland people who go under, the people who faint because of the way who are submerged, crushed, not the people who stand in the glory and power of His transcendent victory.

"Be sure your sin will find you out" - not "will be found out" - "will find you out." Your reservation of consecration will find you out in the circumstances in which you can only triumph when you have gone all the way with Him.

What will you do in the swellings of Jordan if you do not know the glories of His victory, the wonderful confidence of reigning in life by Him?

This compromise was the result of their insistence. God is very often forced to give us less than His best because we will not have His best. Israel again and again refused. God said, "I will give you My second best. You will lose." God said, "All right have what you want, but you are losing. The day will come and declare it when you will find that you made a great mistake, a terrible mistake, and lost infinitely more than you could have lost by taking all the risks involved by the full consecration." Some demand, some fear of loss, some sacrifice which seemed to be required of us. We say, "Bring us not over this Jordan. Let us stay here. Do not present that challenge. Do not obsess [or upset] us with these things, let us stay here."

We find them everywhere. If that is your attitude let me say, as one who has taken that attitude before now, there is more over that Jordan, at any cost, than eye hath ever seen or ear heard or that hath entered into the heart of man.

Let us say, "I am going over Jordan, accepting the full programme of God." "By any road, at any cost." Believe me, you will find it has been infinitely worthwhile.