

## East of the Promise • 1 Chronicles 5

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Read 1 Cor. 10:1-11

#### B. Anadyr

1. Several years ago, I was part of a small team that put on a pastors' conference in the Russian city of Anadyr.
2. Anadyr is the capital of the province of Chukotka – which lies across the Bering Strait from Alaska.
3. My friend Roger Shea was the Alaskan director of the relief organization, *Samaritan's Purse* & had developed some great contacts in Chukotka.
4. The Russian government had given up on the region & left the people to fend for themselves, so *Samaritan's Purse* brought in aid, using churches as the distribution system.
5. The pastors there were asking for training, so Roger put together a team to go in & help them.
6. Being a pilot, he flew us in on a 6-seat, prop plane.
7. The flight lasted several hours & as we neared Anadyr, the weather turned nasty.
8. A fierce wind blew us off our path as we made our approach.
9. I'll never forget looking through the windshield at the runway at Anadyr; a dark stretch of cement in the middle of a massive field of snow.
10. The Center line of the windshield ought to have been lined up with the runway, but we were **way** to the left.
  - a. The wind was so strong, we were flying sideways!
  - b. As we descended, the runway didn't seem to be getting any nearer.
  - c. I was sure we'd miss it & have to come back around and try again.
  - d. With fuel running low that made it all the more exciting.
  - e. As we flew lower, the wind lost strength, & at the last moment, Roger was able to pull the nose around & straighten out, bringing us into line with the runway.
  - f. Seconds later, the wheels touched & we landed, safe & sound, except for 4 guys with heart rates over 200 beats per minute!

#### C. Pointed In the Right Direction

1. Roger was able to land the plane **safely** because he knew the key was to keep the nose pointed in the right direction.
2. He had **no control** over the conditions **outside** the plane, but he **did** have control over where the plane was headed.
3. He knew success & safety lay in one thing; keeping his eyes on the goal & heading in that direction.
4. That's a principle illustrated by our text today.

### II. TEXT

#### A. Set the Scene

1. In the first 9 chapters of Chronicles, the author lists the chief families of the 12 tribes of Israel.
2. In ch. 5 we learn of the 2½ tribes who settled on the Eastern side of the Jordan River; Reuben, Gad, & half of Manasseh.
3. The region was called **Gilead**, & wasn't part of the Promised Land God called Israel to inhabit.
4. So why did these 2½ tribes settle there? We find out in Numbers.
  - a. When Israel was traveling **through** this region on their way **TO** the Promised Land,
  - b. They asked permission from Sihon, King of the Amorites to cross his land.
  - c. He refused them passage, then to make sure they **didn't**, attacked.

- d. Bad move, because the Amorites were defeated & fled their lands.
  - e. Bashan, king of the Ammonites who lived just north made the same mistake.
  - f. He attacked Israel & *also* suffered a crushing defeat. The Ammonites fled *their* territory.
5. This meant a large region of rich pasture lands became available.
- a. Since Reuben, Gad, & Manasseh had huge numbers of flocks & herds,
  - b. They asked Moses for permission to settle there, on the Eastern side of the Jordan.
  - c. Since the land promised Israel by God lay on the *Western* side of the river,
  - d. Moses tried to talk them out of settling there *but they insisted*.
  - e. Realizing he couldn't *force* them, he relented & allowed them occupation of Gilead.
  - f. But he made it clear they weren't doing what God called them to & it would eventually come back to haunt them.
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6. Well, here we are in Chronicles 700 years later.
- a. And what Moses warned about has happened.
  - b. The calamity he foretold has occurred.
7. Ch. 5 *begins* with a list of the main families of the tribe of Reuben.
- a. Then we have the clans of the tribe of Gad.
  - b. Before the writer lists the families of Manasseh,
  - c. He tells us in vs. 19-22 about how, in their early days, when the Eastern tribes looked to & called on God, He gave them a mighty victory over their enemies.
8. But the chapter ends with a complete reversal of fortune.

### **B. Vs. 25-26**

**<sup>25</sup> And they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. <sup>26</sup> So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, that is, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He carried the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh into captivity. He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river of Gozan to this day.**

1. As generations passed, though the eastern tribes were *relatives* of those living in the west, they grew distant from one another.
2. The East became increasingly independent.
3. Because the Jordan River formed a natural barrier, the easterners access to the worship center of Israel was restricted.
4. In the early years when their faith was strong, they called on God & He blessed them.
5. But as the years went by, their faith wavered;
  - a. They turned to the idols of their neighbors.
  - b. And eventually turned away from God altogether.
  - c. When the Assyrians came through the area bent on expanding their empire,
  - d. The eastern tribes were quickly defeated & carried away captive,
  - e. As the judgment of God on their rebellion against Him.

### **C. The Lesson**

1. There's a simple but important lesson for us to glean from what happened to the Eastern Tribes.
2. And I believe there are people here today for whom this lesson is crucial. →
3. Because they're like those Eastern tribes.
4. You see, the Easterners had *seen* all the same things the western tribes had.
  - a. They'd *eaten* the miraculous provision of daily bread called manna.
  - b. They'd *drunk* the water that flowed from the rock.

- c. They'd *followed* the pillar of fire & cloud through the wilderness.
- d. They'd been *surrounded* by the miraculous, night & day for years!
- e. They *knew* the *goodness* of God; they'd *experienced* His *faithfulness* countless times.
5. They'd even entered into *covenant* with Him, they were God's people.
6. But they'd not gone all the way with Him to *where* He wanted them to be.
7. They were content to sit *on the border, next* to it; looking across the Jordan at the Promise.
8. Even there, just short of being in the center of God's will, they continued to enjoy a measure of His blessing, *as long as* they looked to Him.
9. But eventually, *that look was turned away* from Him to other things.
10. Their hearts followed their eyes, & they fell away.

#### **D. The Problem**

1. Numbers 32 is where we read of Reuben & Gad asking Moses if they could just stay in the East.
2. They asked because they considered Gilead *good enough*.
3. The Promised Land might be where God wanted them, but *they* deemed Gilead good enough.
4. Listen: Good *enough* is *neither* 'good,' *nor* 'enough!'
  - a. It's not what God wants for His people.
  - b. He wants nothing less than the BEST for us.
5. As we follow Jesus, we must be sure we never settle for good enough,
  - a. For thinking we've gone far enough.
  - b. Following Jesus means walking with Him *all the way*, wherever He goes.

#### **E. Mediocre**

1. There are many *Eastern Christians* today. I don't mean they live in Asia.
2. By Eastern Christians I mean they repeat the error of the Eastern Tribes.
3. They're in covenant with God because they've been born again.
  - a. They've enjoyed the Bread & Water of life.
  - b. They've seen God answer prayer.
4. They've heard the call of the Spirit to a deeper walk with God, to give themselves *completely* to Him, but they've not crossed that spiritual Jordan.
5. They've *received* what God *offers* but haven't yielded themselves to Him.
6. Like Reuben, Gad & Manasseh, they know there's *more* & that's where they *ought* to be, but they're content, having come *part way* with God, to stay where they are.
7. Believing the basics & going to church is *good enough*.
  - a. They bought a Study Bible & have one of their radio presets set to a Christian station.
  - b. That's as far as they need or want to take their spiritual life.
  - c. They see Faith in Christ as a kind of *spiritual fire insurance*, it protects them from hell.
  - d. But as for *how* they *live*, they look more to the world for direction than God.
8. Think of those Eastern tribes; they were *part* of the *people* of Israel,
  - a. But they weren't living IN the *place* of Israel.
  - b. They'd stopped following God in Gilead & settle down there.
  - c. When God moved on, they stayed put, happy where they were.
9. But what's a disciple? A disciple is someone who want sot be just like his/her rabbi.
  - a. And how does that happen? What's the process?
  - b. They stay with the rabbi 24/7/365. They never leave their side. They follow them everywhere.
10. In Luke 9, we read of 3 potential disciples Jesus invited to follow Him.
  - a. Each of them said okay but put a condition on it.
  - b. Jesus told them there could be no conditions.

- c. The true disciple understands that following Jesus is an *all or nothing* proposition.
- 11. The Eastern Tribes at first identified themselves as the people of God & knew His blessing.
- 12. But it was inevitable that they ended up looking more like the world than the people of God, because they stopped following God.
- 13. They figured they'd gone far enough. And Gilead was good enough.
- 14. The fact is – Gilead wasn't Israel; it was the world.
- 15. *Eastern Christians* make the same error as the Eastern Tribes.
  - a. They're saved, but they've not surrendered themselves completely to God.
  - b. They *received* eternal life, but they've not *given* God *their* lives.
- 16. Some have said it this way: They've taken Jesus as Savior but not as Lord.

#### **F. Hebrews 2:1**

- 1. The writer of Hebrews sees the history of Israel as a huge example to our walk with God.
- 2. I suspect he wrote 2:1 with the Eastern tribes in mind –  
**Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.**
- 3. Reuben, Gad, & Manasseh drifted from God.
  - a. Their turn from Him wasn't quick; *it took years*.
  - b. But it *began* when they fixed their eyes on the where they were rather than on the Promise.
  - c. Because their focus was in the wrong place, they ended up drifting away.
- 4. The word “drift” means to slip away through inattention.
- 5. It was used of a *ship* that had slipped its anchor & *drifted* with the tide.
- 6. The phrase, “give the more earnest heed to” was also a nautical term.
  - a. It described the action of a pilot who steered a ship to port in a crowded harbor.
  - b. That takes intense concentration.
- 7. The writer's intent is clear: The Christian life requires focus, attention, & determination.
  - a. Grace isn't an invitation to spiritual laziness.
  - b. It ought to inspire & empower us to diligence.
- 8. If we don't apply ourselves to going deeper with God, to entering in to all He has for us in grace, we run the risk of drifting away.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. Slipped Ring**

- 1. The word ‘drift’ was also used to describe a ring slipping from a finger.
- 2. For centuries the ring has been a symbol of covenant & identity.
- 3. The wedding ring means a person is in covenant with another.
- 4. In the ancient world, men wore rings that identified them as members of a noble house.
- 5. You'll remember in the story of the prodigal son, when he returns home, his father puts a ring on his finger – identifying him as a beloved son.
- 6. That means the son had lost his ring somewhere.
  - a. When he first left home he'd worn it proudly.
  - b. But his years in the world had robbed him of it.
  - c. It had slipped from his finger as he'd lost his way.
- 7. When he repented & returned home, his father didn't greet him with stern words of rebuke.
- 8. He saw his son's repentance & covered him with forgiveness.
- 9. Then he renewed his identity with a new ring.
- 10. Maybe that's where *you* are today.