

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Numbers: Lessons From Spiritual Casualties And Conquerors
Part XXVIII: Resting In Our Good God's Sovereign Livelihood Supply
(Numbers 20:14-22 with Deuteronomy 2:1-8a)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Fear of livelihood failure is on the rise, and that for a variety of reasons that seem to be coming together all at once (as follows):

(1) When the then Senator Barak Obama ran for president, in a conversation he had with "Joe the Plumber" in Toledo, Ohio, he said, "I think when you spread the wealth around [via taxing the "haves" to give to the "have nots"], it's good for everybody." (tampabay.com, "Joe the Plumber: A Transcript," 10/19/08, Tampa Bay Times)

Thus, the Obama administration has moved as in "socialism" to promote spreading the wealth around, with many reacting, including Rabbi Aryeh Spero who wrote the op-ed, "What the Bible Teaches About Capitalism" in The Wall Street Journal on January 30, 2012. There, the rabbi outright condemned such socialism as "immoral."

Some letters of response to the article sided with the rabbi like the one from Rich Batey of Aliso Viejo, California who claimed "The Bible's Eighth Commandment [Thou shalt not steal] is a defense of capitalism" as socialism steals from the rich, violating their personal property rights. Other letters supported socialism like the letter from Max Ballard of Green Bay, Wisconsin who called it Biblical. He cited Acts 2:44-45 where the Early Christians "had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need." (Ibid., February 4-5, 2012, p. A14)

[Actually, the Early Church **willfully gave** of their goods, they did **not** have them **forcefully taken** by the **state** as in **socialism!**]

Clearly, the debate between socialism and capitalism is intense in view of the current recession and the financial hardship many face.

(2) That hardship is growing, too: we heard our New Hartford Town Clerk testify in last Sunday's worship service how mortgage foreclosures are hitting people in our town with increased intensity!

(3) Also, the February 2, 2012 The Wall Street Journal, p. A3 reported the nation's median household income "declined in more than three-quarters of the nation's metropolitan areas" from 2007 to 2010.

(4) Charles Schwab, founder and chairman of the Charles Schwab Corporation, wrote an op-ed, "The Fed Votes No Confidence" in the February 6, 2012 issue of the same paper, p. A13, noting the fear of financial loss is now global with "a worldwide aversion to risk."

So, we ask, "As government ideology, income loss and/or debt tempt me to fear a loss of livelihood, how can I handle it?"

Need: "The economy, government ideology, income loss and/or debt all tempt me to fear a loss of my livelihood, so how can I handle it?!"

- I. **Nearing Edom, Moses asked its king if Israel could cross his land (instead of going the livelihood risky way around it in the desert), offering to respect Edom's property in protection of its livelihood:**

- A. Moses offered for Israel to stay on the "public caravan route", not to harm Edom's land or use its livelihood-critical well water, Numbers 20:14-17; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Numbers 20:17.
- B. This request was obviously genuine, for the route "passed through narrow mountain defiles and could easily be defended and barred against access" by the Edomites, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 239.

II. **Edom refused Moses' request with the threat of war, Num. 20:18.**

III. **Moses made a second plea for passage, offering to pay for ANY water Israel used, but Edom strongly refused, Numbers 20:19-21a.**

IV. **Moses then turned from Edom, leading Israel south to the Gulf of Aqaba and then back up north east of Edom out in the desert to head for Canaan, Num. 20:21b-22; Ibid., B. K. C., O. T., p. 253.**

V. **Though Moses' action HUMANLY put Israel at GREAT livelihood risk herself, he acted in faith in God's signals that the Lord would sovereignly supply for Israel's livelihood if she went around Edom:**

- A. Deuteronomy 2:1-8a gives details of the Numbers 20:14-22 event.
- B. That passage shows **faith in God's sovereign worldwide livelihood supply** was the *basis* for motivating Moses to go around Edom:
 1. God had told Moses before he ever made his request to Edom's king that Edom would be afraid of Israel, Deuteronomy 2:1-4a.
 2. That being so, God wanted Moses to be *careful not* to **provoke** Edom to **war** (Deut. 2:4b-5a NIV), for **GOD** would **NOT give any** of **Edom's** land to *Israel* in battle as **He** had *sovereignly* given "the hill country of Seir" to **Edom** as "**his own**", Deut. 2:5b NIV.
 3. Rather, in respect of Edom's territory and its livelihood, Israel was to pay Edom in silver, the international medium of exchange, for what she used of Edom's food and water, Deut. 2:6; I. S. B. E., 1937, v. IV, p. 2793. Thus, Israel's depletion of Edom's valuable livelihood resources could be offset by Edom's international trade.
 4. Another reason for Israel's need to **respect** Edom's *property* was the fact that **God** had **also sovereignly** blessed **Israel** with her *own possessions* "in all the works of your hands," Deut. 2:7a NIV. Israel's toil in Egyptian bondage was repaid through her plundering the Egyptians by **God's sovereign provision**, Ex. 12:35-36 NIV! Israel thus had no need to seize the land God had given to Edom.
 5. Besides, Moses observed the Lord had not let Israel lack anything while she walked through the wilderness for 40 years: she was fed manna (Exodus 16:35), her clothes and her shoes did not wear out (Deut. 29:5), and with no contact with other nations, she did not need to spend **ANY** of the riches she gained in spoiling Egypt all during those 40 years! (Deut. 2:7b) [The *only* time Israel used her money in the desert was to give for the tabernacle building, and she was restrained as the people gave too much! (Ex. 35:4-22; 36:3-7)]
 6. In addition, since Israel was headed toward Canaan that God had promised to give entirely to Israel (Gen. 15:13-21), so there was far more property to be gained if Israel simply obeyed God re: Edom!
 7. Also, God's claim of sovereignly deciding that **Edom possess the Seir hill country** while determining that **Israel spoil Egypt and take Canaan** shows **God** is **SOVEREIGN** over *personal property AND its DISTRIBUTION WORLDWIDE!* Israel was to **RELAX** on **property and livelihood issues** and **just obey** the Lord!
 8. So, Israel could *amply afford* to **buy food and water** from *Edom*, but, **even IF** Edom **refused** her *passage*, God Who had led Israel to **spoil Egypt**, and had filled her **food, water, clothes** and **shoe** needs for **40 years** in the **wilderness** could be trusted to **keep on supplying** them **EVEN IF Israel did NOT fight Edom!**
 9. Thus, when Edom strongly denied Israel passage through her land, Moses' faith in God's supply on all these other fronts led him to turn from Edom into the livelihood "at risk" desert! (Deut. 2:8a)

Application: *May we (1) trust in Christ for salvation from sin to be a child of God, John 1:11-12. (2) Then, may we trust God Who as worldwide Sovereign over wealth and livelihood provisions to meet our own livelihood needs regardless of the economy, government ideology, income loss and/or debts! (3) As such, may we (a) respect the property of others given to them by God, and (b) do God's will for us, knowing He will meet our livelihood needs in the process!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Last Tuesday as I was preparing to head to the Church office, and there to begin typing up this sermon in the computer, my wife planned to drop me off there and take the car on an extended errand.

Thus, I put a stamped envelope in my shirt pocket, intending to mail it at the Church mailbox. The envelope contained a payment to a member in our Church for a service he had performed for me, and I wanted to make sure he got the payment that week.

My wife suggested that we take the envelope to the believer's house, noting he might need the money that same day!

I already had a postage stamp on the envelope, but, in spite of that fact, I decided it might be a good idea to follow her suggestion.

When we drove into the yard, and I went to the door, the believer was thankfully home, having decided he needed to wait there for a business transaction he was expecting. When I gave him the envelope and explained what it contained, he expressed how "timely" it was relative to a special need that had just arisen!

I returned to the car and shared with my wife that it had been the right thing to do -- to take the envelope with the check to the believer versus mailing it! He had needed it **that day** -- not a day or two later as the mail system worked! God who meets that believer's needs had spurred my wife and then me to take the money to the believer REGARDLESS if I had put a stamp on the envelope!

[Tuesday about noon after I had finished typing up the first draft of this sermon and this closing illustration, the member I had paid earlier that morning gave me a call at my office! He was rejoicing over several good financial opportunities the Lord had just brought his way!

He ended his call by laughingly saying, "Say, Don, I've got to go now and eat a little lunch and give thanks!" I rejoiced with him!!]

God is SOVEREIGN over EVERYBODY'S LIVELIHOOD issues on a WORLDWIDE scale, and He can and WILL move MOUNTAINS so-to-speak to PROVIDE for His own.

So, regardless what the government ideology of the era is, regardless of income loss or debt or even what's happening on the global scene that may affect our livelihood, may we TRUST a GOD who has WORLDWIDE LIVELIHOOD SOVEREIGNTY, and just go ahead and do His will!