

Jan 5, 75 P.M. WXR.I -

## LIFE'S BOUNDARIES

Numbers 34

Our text - your South border, your West border, your North border, your East border. It pays to read carefully even the (most) unpromising chapters in the Bible. Whether they be about geography or a census table - or about the family tree. For example, we read in this 34th chapter of Numbers, and we find little expectation of finding anything except the sketch of the boundaries of Canaan.

But as I read these descriptions of the North, South, East and West boundaries of the land, it seemed to me that here is a parable of my own life. Life had its boundaries. The North, the South, the East, and the West.

When I think of this text, I think of the family where there was a holiday tradition - at each Christmas, one of the gifts that this man received from his wife was a (large jig saw puzzle). And each year the whole family works together during the Holiday Season to conquer this challenge. To add to the complication and the surprise, the wife always removes the (picture) from the cover of the box. So that there will be no clue to what the puzzle, when finished, will look like. But this past year, this woman left the cover in tact - and the puzzle was spread out on several tables and the people began to work. A day later, some of his friends and the children were working, and they realized that the pieces they were working on would never make the picture on the box, which his wife had left. His wife had bought (two puzzles) and (switched the boxes). Now what a complicated affair. And often (life) seems like that. As the years go on, and the calendar is changed from time to time. We discover that there are certain boundaries about everything that we participate in and take part in.

Most of the people, or men that I know anything about, who get ready for the New Year. One of the first things they do is, they (make sure the T. V.) is in working order. It seems to be a New Year's tradition with them. Because on New Year's Day they have to see that Rose Bowl and a few other things. Like the bowls that are filled with sugar, etc. Now this is a tradition. Also on New Year's Day, there are lots of people who say you have to have black-eyed peas, to really make

*Bad Luck* Hang a new calendar or almanac before daylight on New Year Day, it through the year. Now this is part of the New Year celebration.  
*Bad Luck* If a strange man enters the house 1st - good luck. if a woman comes 1st, expect bad luck.  
*Bad Luck* opening all the windows of the house a few min's just before midnight on New-year eve sets the  
 Let me (ask) you what you feel personally about the calendar that is actually going to be turned and suddenly you are going to have a New Year.

We are creatures of time and the calendar is a measuring stick. There is the year when you were born, the year when you were born again, the year when you were married.

Now it is a New Year again. Now if you make any New Year's (Resolutions) what are you going to think about in 1975.

Do you ever tell yourself that you would like to stay just where you are. There are many ways in which we try to do this. We would stay to the turning of the calendar and stop the marching of time and ignore tomorrow - that has become today. But in the Old Testament, this was not the case. God told the people of Israel, ye have dwelt long enough on this mount. It is time for you to take up your tents and move out and occupy this land. We must deliberately set ourselves to look forward to the challenging miles ahead. Because there is an advance before us.

There is (a) direction that we ought to move in. There are divine instructions about what we ought to do tomorrow. What is the direction that God would have us

to take.

God's instructions to Israel were always specific. And the direction was clearly indicated.

Now the swift tides of today are going to sweep you down and drag you on to tomorrow. Because time is going to move on and you are going to be left without any options. And the New Year is going to bring to you a purpose. If you are in God's army.

Think about what God said to these people of Israel. He says we are going to, as he spoke to Moses, we are going to set up some boundaries. And when you think about the boundaries about the world that God was talking about then, that little famous country is the smallest of the territory. Which has about the same number of square miles as England. The great width of Palestine is 50 miles. It's greatest length was perhaps 160 miles. Never the less, it was the promised and the chosen land, where God's name was known. The land where his redeeming purpose was unfolding. The land for every consecrated by the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension.

Now this shows the difference between the bigness and the greatness - because there were great nations surrounding Israel. Babylon, Greece, the Romans. They must have looked on this little country whose territory they often were able to overpower. So men make a mistake when they regard as narrow and limited lives - that they are to live in this world. When we think of St. Paul who was a tent maker and had to toil with his hands - yet he was a rich man. He says I have all things that abound. O the depth of the riches - both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

Let us think about the borders of Israel. As they are described to us in the book of Numbers. Now I want to use the borders and the boundaries that you have in your life.

I think you know what I am talking about. Here is a piece of property - now it has a boundary line on the South side, the North, the East, and West. All around it.

~~I. THE BOUNDARY ON THE (SOUTH) - V. 3~~

"There your south quarter shall be from the wilderness of Zin along by the coast of Edom, and this was the desert country beyond which stretched Arabia and Egypt. And below the southern part of the Dead Sea was completely desolate - desert."

A symbol of the past. This border is a picture of the past. When Moses was preparing the people for the crossing of Jordan and the conquest of the Canaan - he said, of what lay behind them far to the South, ye shall return this way no more.

Now every life has passed through some desert country. Where we do not wish to travel again. There is the desert in the place of mistakes, failures, disappointments, transgressions, sorrow, death.

Now we think of the men who in the end greatly served God. Yet they had much behind them. Beyond their South quarter, they needed to forget it. There was Manasseh - king of Judah. Who for more than half a century filled the land with crimes, cruelties, and idolatry. And was taken captive and carried to Babylon.

Yet he repented and prayed to the Lord and the Lord forgave him and restored to him his throne. In the years which were left to him, he did much to atone for his long reign of iniquity and sin.

David, greatly honored, blessed of God - lifted from the tender sheep to the throne. Yet, had a triple transgression of adultery, murder, and hypocrisy. But David repented, prayed, against thee only have I sinned. God heard his prayer and forgave him and answered that only other part of his prayer too - restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Peter, whom Jesus spoke more often than to any other, warned him directly and earnestly, more than any other. And the man who protested that although all people should forsake Jesus, and flee - that he was ready to go with him to prison and to death. Yet in the great hour Jesus needed him - when he was bound in the chamber of the High Priest, brought into the Court Yard, he swore that he had never met him before. Suppose that Peter had permitted that dark chapter of the past, of his lack of love and faith, and his service to his Lord. Suppose your past, the lack of your love, your loyalty, your faith to the church were to stand.

Instead, Peter repented. He went out into the night and wept bitterly. And Christ restored him to his office. And Peter had thrice declared his love before he had thrice denied him. And Christ said to him - feed my sheep.

That old South border or boundary line in your life. Of all the past - is important.

Paul, a man who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the (church), wasted the church. Persecuted. Put to death the followers of Jesus. How much

indeed Paul had to forget. But when Jesus appeared unto him and revealed unto him his great mercy and glory, Paul did not permit that past to conquer him and silence his voice. He said that he was not fit to be called an Apostle. That he was the chief of sinners. And yet he said, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

How about the South boundary in your life in 1975. Beyond which and to the desert territory of the past, you think about the failures, the blunders, the sins your soul shall not be permitted to go on with them. Yes, life has some boundaries. There is the South - and it is a symbol of the past.

## II. THE (WEST) BOUNDARY

The uncharted highway.

The West boundary he says in V. 6, shall even have the great sea for a border. This shall be your West border - the Mediterranean Sea - the great sea he called it between the lands of Israel and other countries. But even with the great sea, we are never isolated one from another. It was on the highway of the nations, by sea and by land. And the nations landed on Israel's shores. Armies came across that uncharted highway out there.

Symbolic Now the openness upon the sea suggests that our lives ought not to be solitary. And self-contained. But in touch with mankind. We ought to consider nothing human foreign to us - the rights, the sorrows, and the hopes of men. And the sea which separates the nation - also unites them.

You remember Israel was called to be a separated people. Called out from among the nations and chosen - not for herself. But that in her, all nations might be blessed. As indeed, they have been blessed. "So God said to Abraham, at the beginning of Israel's history, thou shall be a blessing. And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. That is a verse that many people cling too. (Thou shall be a blessing.)

William Jennings Bryan, in speaking to the students at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, took that as his text and brought a stirring address to the students. (Thou shalt be a blessing.) In the course of his address, he referred to the fact that although three times he had received the votes of millions of his fellow citizens for the highest office of the Presidency, and many other honors from his fellowmen, it was his greatest satisfaction that under the hand of God - and as a witness to Christ and his Kingdom, he had been able to (some degree at least to be a blessing to his fellow man.)

Now the great sea, which was Israel's Western border, suggests something else to us. When you look out upon the Sea rolling, it is apparently limitless with the vastness before you. It seems to speak of the ambitions and the aspirations of our life. When you look out upon the (Atlantic Ocean), and you watch the ships sail to the unseen and the unknown, and the unexplored which lies beyond our horizon. It is a moving scene. But there is a boundary. There is a great sea.

There is a painting by Turner, of Sir Walter Raleigh as a child. He lies there in his velvet suit resting his head upon his hands. And in his eye is a far off look as he listens, charmed, and fascinated to the old sailor who is sitting by him on a coil of rope. Telling him of lands and adventures beyond the sea. There was born the pathfinder, the explorer, the discoverer. There the boy was - father to the man.

Life is like the sea. It is a big thing with great invitation. And great possibilities.

There it is. Too bad to live it in a small way. We need some voices to stir us into desire and into action.

As Deborah, the prophetess of Israel stirred Barak into action about the great battle. Arise Barak and lead thy captive, captive thy son of Abinoam.

Milton saw the sea and heard it's sound and invitation. And it evoked in him by the Holy Spirit to write something. ("Such as the world will not willingly let die.")

The man who is satisfied has no future - he is like the dust of this earth. The world waits for youth - the great inventions have yet not been made. The great bridges have not yet been built. The great statues have not yet been carved. The best books have not yet been written. The best songs are still unsung. The best sermons have never been preached yet. The call of the sea on life's Western boundary has a special meaning, for all men.

It has a meaning for people who are in the last quarter of life. The last section of life. Who may be using the last calendar year and yet, there are increasing numbers of people who are living in this age of ours - but they increase in the knowledge, medicine, and here are these people many of them well and sound. Some are retired. But not to inactivity. A man needs to realize what is the chief end of man. The chief end of man is not to be secure - there ought to be more than that to your life. There is this West boundary - the great sea. The great adventure of life actually never ceases for a man. This is a lesson that you have to learn. That your fellowship with Christ. And it ought to read

like the biography of Kaleb. When we first hear about Kaleb, he was 40 years of age. When he brought back his report and the other ten spies brought back an evil report. Now later on we hear of Kaleb when he is 85 years of age. And the boundaries of the land and the borders are being decided. And he said, to Joshua, I am four score and five years old. And yet, I am as strong this day as the day when Moses sent me - as my strength was even then as it is now, for war. Both to go out and come in. Now therefore, give me this mountain where the giants are and the cities great and fenced. If so be, the Lord will be with me, I shall be able to drive them out. Now with that spirit, he was able to meet the last quarter of life. And so, if you are in your last calendar year so to speak, let me encourage you that the Western border is that vast great sea of unlimited and openness out before you.

So to the South is the symbol of the past. And to the West, there is a symbol out upon the uncharted highway of the mighty sea.

### III. THE (NORTH)

The daily uneven journey, V. 17 - and this shall be your North border. From the great sea you shall point it out for your mount Hor. Mt. Hermon. Now this mountain was a snow crowned mountain on the Lebanon range. Whence flowed the rivers which brought the wonderful moisture down, to the valleys.

The North border is a symbol in your life of the daily walk. It is - it will have its mountain peaks. And it will have its valleys. And in 1975 as you think about the boundary of life here. This mountain suggests adoration and worship.

When you think about the hills and the mountains that you are going to climb.  
Psalm 36 - "Thy righteousness is like a great mountain." Psalm 135 - "As the mountains  
are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear him." Psalm 121  
- "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh by help." 72nd Psalm  
- "the mountains shall bring forth peace, to the people." Thus it is that the mountains  
speak of adoration and worship. Every life ought to have a mountain boundary.

From the mountains come down not only the streams which form the rivers which  
make the valleys fertile but also the cooling winds which come down and make one  
healthy and vigorous. In the song of Solomon in speaking about the North wind he  
says, "awake, oh North wind. And come thou South and blow upon my garden and the  
spices thereof may flow forth."

It is a sad thing as we think about the New Year and a man does not have a  
mountain boundary of worship. There is no skyland or skyline. There are no  
stars of faith. No adoration.

Every man needs a skyland on the parkway in the mountains of Virginia - there  
is a place called skyland. It is up in the clouds and from it you can see in the  
distance. And every man needs a boundary with the North. Where there will be as  
Jeremiah Taylor said, holy living, will bring holy dying.

Think about the book of Gen. - it said God made the stars also.

When Naomi had left Bethlehem to escape the famine, and decides to return to  
Judah - her two daughters in law - Ruth and Orpha, walked with her to the border  
- the boundary line, of the country. And there they knew that they were not of  
her people and Naomi advised them to return to their native land. Orpha and Ruth  
both wept because they thought about leaving her. And she departs. Ruth however,  
who was attracted to the spiritual part of Naomi, knowing that she was godly,

because the influence of her life had somehow brought promise and hope. And she had met Jehovah. She cried out, "entreat me not to leave thee nor to return from following after thee. Where thou goest, I will go. Where thou lodges, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people. And thy God, my God. Her request was granted. Every man, every woman needs this North boundary that calls them to go to that which is higher. And may 1975 - your boundary be like Ruth's."

✓ There is an interesting story about Matthew Henry's father - when he was courting a young woman. He was a Presbyterian preacher, and the girl that he was in love with, was heir to a consideration fortune. But the girl's father objected to her marriage. You see, he said to his daughter, your young man may be a perfect gentleman. A brilliant scholar, and an excellent preacher. But he is poor and we do not even know where he comes from.? Now I want you to note this girl's reply which was one of wisdom. No, we do not know all of this, but "we know where he is going. And I should like to go with him."

This was a splendid reply and permission for the marriage was given. And of course, she became the mother of the great Matthew Henry, who was also a preacher, scholar, and wrote a Bible commentary.

Now, people are being led and they need to be led of God. Can the world tell by your life where you are going. Your life, and your example may be the best sermon that some people ever read, or hear.

Now the Psalmist said, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." Why was he glad. He was glad because in the house of God, we think of God. We get our heads out of time - into eternity. He was glad because in the house of God he had fellowship with them that feared the Lord. And then, they

that fear the Lord, shall often together speak together. He was glad because in the house of the Lord, the house of worship, he found help for the battles of life. And strength for the uneven walk and the burden. In the house of God he felt the force of evil weakening against him. AND the force of good growing stronger. And he found greatest of all, he was glad because in the house of the Lord he heard God's greatest proclamation - the proclamation of the pardon of sin. There, will I speak peace unto them. Every man needs this Northern boundary in his life.

Life is going to be sorta hilly for you - there will be mountains. Like this North boundary - going across those peaks and those valleys.

One day William Barclay was in London on New Year's Day. He was crossing a busy street. When a hand was layed on his arm. It was a little old lady carrying a shopping bag. Will you take me across the street, she asked. "I am too nervous now-a-days to cross by myself. So he took her by the arm and helped her across the street. And when they got to the other side, she thanked him. And as he was turning to leave her - she turned and looked at him, and said - "never grow old." And then, he said as he vanished in the crowd - he thought about her advice. She found old age so frightening - she found the daily experiences of time humiliating. She said, never grow old. Now there are many things that can be said about that little bit of advice. First of all, it is impossible advice. You may stop many things in life and in this world - but you cannot stop the years. 1975 is going to come. You may keep some things at bay for a long time - but you cannot stop the slow decay of body. The strength - the slow deterioration of the physical faculties. No man can live in perpetual youth. Now, you may be careful and delay some processes

Time & Tide Wait for No Man! - Eng. Proverb.

Old Farmer's Almanac 1975 whole printed page telling with women "Catherine Best" sim. made. twice "Dry" aging slow tooth go get "a woman" told you - to school

but you cannot stop it. So the old lady's advice in thinking that it is a handicap - of being impossible. And second, it is bad advice. For this kind of advice would lead you to frustration. As Richard Steele said, there are few people who can grow old with a good grace. There are a few who are embarrassing sights. When they think about someone who is trying to be young when they are old. You know there is nothing so lovely in the sight of someone who is old - dressing, talking, acting, speaking, their age. But someone who is of mature years - trying to appear young is really a dangerous thing. For a woman or a man - it draws attention to their own weaknesses. You know there are some valuable abilities in life - we ought to accept some of these things and it is a wise person who can take these. Because on the balance sheet, we discover as Robert Browning in his stanza wrote --- "Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be. The last of life for which the first was made. Our times are in his hands. Who sayeth, a whole I planned. Youth shows but half. Trust God, see all, nor be afraid."

Now let us think about the years and what they bring to us. And these boundaries which we have been talking about tonight. 1975 is going to bring to us a sense of proportion and this is going to help us see that this is important. And it is going to bring to us an increasing understanding that we should not waste this year with haste and restless anxiety. Because that never did anyone any good.

This boundary of daily walk ought to bring to each of us a larger tolerance. We ought to be more sympathetic - we ought to be more ready to forgive. The older we get, the more we see this. We see our own lives how we might so easily have made ship-wreck of life when we see someone else in trouble. We learn to say, there but by the grace of God, go I.

This Northern boundary will help us see that we can triumph with the grace of God. And we look back on life, we see all that we have come through. As we look at the South border - the way of sorrow, the way of tears, the pain, the toil. And what we have accomplished with our own two hands - but today was it not for the grace of God to give us confidence, to grow older with the wisdom of God. And we can be sure that the best is really yet to be.

#### IV. THE EAST BORDER OR BOUNDARY OF PALESTINE

I would like to symbolize as the future. I want you to think of the sunrise. Now this boundary started with the sea of Galilee clean down the river Jordan. That little strip of territory that we have toward the rising of the sun. The Bible is not a dull, flat book. The Bible is full of pictures. Here is a stirring beautiful parable. The Eastern boundary speaks of the land toward the sun rise. Likewise when the boundaries of Judah were described after the conquest of the land, an Eastern line was run along the town Adummim, which is also spoken of as the fountain of the sun. And under these beautiful names, the fountain of the sun, and towards the sun rising - Israel's Eastern boundary was described. Life has an Eastern boundary which looks toward the sun rising - the land of hope.

What lies Eastward for you.

What is beyond your horizon.

I remember when I was a boy I used to wonder about what was across the Atlantic Ocean. As you looked across and could see the sun rising in the morning. Seemingly coming up out of the ocean in the East.

There, my friends, is Christian hope. It opens to us an endless vision. We are really not walking toward the sunset. But I think, and would rather hope, we are walking toward the sunrise.

The windows are open toward the sunrising. Christian faith is your pillow for your head as you look toward the sunrise.

You think about Gen. 1 and you count the many times that it measures the day. At the end of each day in succession of the creation, it always comes up with the statement - "and the evening and the morning were the first day." Or the fifth day or the sixth day. And God called the darkness night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. Now that is not the way you and I have put it. Had we been writing the record in the Bible, we would have put, and the evening and the morning were the first day. No, we would have said the morning and the evening were the first day.

For we measure the days from sunrise to sunset. From light to darkness. But the Bible measures the day and the time from evening to morning. And evening and the morning were the first day.

When the town was threatened by enemies in Edom they called the watchman who made his way around the wall. Watchman, what of the night. Watchman, what of the night. The watchman said, the morning cometh - also the night. That is all that the earthly watchman can say. The morning cometh - but also the night. He could say that it is going to be quiet and then there is going to be a storm. There is going to be peace and then hope. Anguish. There is going to be life and then there is going to be death. The morning cometh - also the night.

William Cowper, at a moment of his lowest despair, when his son had gone down - rode over London looking for the river. Into which he had planned to plunge. Fog was so thick that night that he rode in a horse drawn cab for an hour or more. Life had run into the short rows of meaningless hopelessness. To end it all, seeing the better part, valour and wisdom. But where was the river. Rebuking the cabby for taking so long to find the river bank, Cowper thrust open the door of his cab, and upon doing so he discovered that instead of being near the river - he was right back at his own doorstep. That did it, just a co-incidence. He rushed into his room. Took a quill and paper and penned the lines that have cheered millions, who have come to the brink of disaster.

God moves in mysterious ways  
His wonders to perform  
He plants his footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable minds  
Of never failing skill  
He treasures up his brightest designs  
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints - fresh courage take  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense  
But trust him for his grace  
Behind a frowning providence

