

Are You In The Battle?

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[0 : 0 0] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Alright, we're in Numbers 32 as we've already read. And there's an unspoken rule in preaching.

If you can preach, do. If you can't, tell jokes. And if that doesn't work, carry a sword. And so I'm going to carry a sword and talk to you about going forth to war. And what a great night for this, the land on, goer, sender.

First problem we're going to see here, Numbers 32 starts off with an issue, an incident rather than instruction. Remember Numbers 30, it was teaching us about truth-telling and the family, how Dad should help wives and how we should help our children tell it.

And the next one, there was some instruction about compromise, radical actions, and holiness there. Now this is an incident, a problem, and Moses is still here with us and something he will have to deal with in his last days of office there before he'll pass away.

And there's a group of half-and-half Christians, people that wanted to be associated with the people, but they didn't want to do the mission that was given to them. And they were kind of looking for a compromise happening here.

[1 : 0 3] So 31, as I said, of any group of people in the world, ought to be glad to go into the Promised Land. It ought to be us. We've been through Exodus. We've been through Numbers. They've been 40 years through there. And you would think they'd be ready to take it, but they're not quite ready to go into there.

And so in Numbers chapter 31, we get to this problem, and they say we have cattle. This is a place for cattle. So the first thing we're going to see here is that problems were created by poorly managed gain.

There was a problem that they have here. Now that they have possessions to care for, they're not as worried about the promises they claim. Can you believe that after 40 years of walking through the desert, dreaming of the Promised Land, some grass will now distract them from what God would have for them?

It starts off in verse number 1, and when they saw the land. Because it isn't a problem having stuff. It gets said here in offering devotions, it's a problem when those things have you.

And then when you have to start managing the stuff you have. We have all this cattle. Why do you have all this cattle? Because in chapter number 31, God took 12,000 of you and none of you died, and you won this great battle, and He gave it to you, and now you have to take care of it.

[2 : 1 5] So now they're walking through the wilderness, and they're like, I have all this stuff, and I've got to take care of this stuff. Here is an easy way to take care of my stuff. That's how people advertise it to us.

If you see commercials, especially for ladies, it'll be for a minivan. The message is, this will make your life more simple. And that's what we start looking for, is how do we make our lives more simple?

I have cattle. How do I take care of my cattle? This land's going to make my life easier, and that's what I am looking for. So they were governed in their conduct, conduct by worldly and selfish considerations, by the sight of their eyes, and carnal motives.

What they could see affected their decision making. They saw land as something to take care of. So we should beware of falling short of our proper position, our proper portion of life, or being content with the things which belong to this world.

Remember, they had a lot. They had a portion of land for them, and the promised land that they were supposed to take. They had been excited about it. They had looked at it, and they were supposed to go and get it, but they didn't take the position that God had for them.

[3 : 18] Do you not believe that the law, that our purpose in life, and your mission in life, is a place to settle down and do good? Somewhere along the way, they just thought, this is about us getting a piece of land, and this piece of land's available.

But that was never the case. God did not take them out of Egypt, to take them to a greener pasture. God did not part the Red Sea, so they could be divided people, living for their own self-interest. God said, let my people go, so they may serve me.

And God was making them a people, conquering enemies, and giving them a portion of land for his glory, and his eternal purposes. It wasn't about you, and it wasn't about your cattle, and it wasn't ever about you having land.

So now that you found land, you can't stop going forward, because getting land was never your objective. Your land was to be obedient unto me. And we see clearly in Joshua 22, if you want to turn there, verse number 10, we're going to see what's the results of their decision, that they made.

They created a division between them and their brothers. They needed to build an altar, so generations to come would know, that they were the children of Israel. Verse 10 says of Joshua 22, and when they came into the borders of Jacob, that are the land of Canaan, and the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see it.

[4 : 33] They built it so they could see it, not to do sacrifices on. And the other tribes, they were mad about this. They're saying, you don't need an altar, this is where you're going, this is what God's plan is.

And they were ready to take up a war against them. The Lord God of gods, the Lord of gods, he knoweth, and Israel shall know. If it be rebellion of in this transgression against the Lord, save us not this day.

If we're rebellion guys, kill us today. That we have built us an altar, to turn from following the Lord, or to offer therein burnt offerings, or meat offerings, or to offer peace offerings therein.

Let the Lord himself require it. And if you do not rather have done it for fear of this, saying, in time come your children, might speak unto your children, saying, what have you done with the Lord God of Israel?

The Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you. Verse 26, build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice. What they were saying was, if we don't build this altar, generations to come are going to come to us, and they're going to say, what portion do you have with the children of Israel?

[5 : 38] We didn't see you there. We don't see you as part of the family reunion. We don't see you in the land. How do we know you're part of them? And this altar is going to help. And then at the end here, in verse number 27, it says, that your children may not say to our children in time to come, you have no part in the Lord.

They knew that their decision to separate from the land and the mission of God would cause generations to come to wonder, are you really part of them? And that was a reasonable thing to think, because we find out that it happened.

And then it said that the Lord made a border. Verse 25, the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you. Is that true? Remember when people speak in the Bible, they don't always speak truth.

Our Bible is infallible, and it's true, but it records people saying wrong things. God made Jordan, but he didn't make a division between those tribes and the other two and a half tribes. He did not divide those people.

The Lord made the river, and they made the decision of what side they were going to be on. The Lord made the border, but it was their choice to get on the other side of it. See, God creates warriors and not watchers.

[6 : 42] He wanted every one of them to be involved. There was to be a separation, but the great gain was causing them. There was supposed to be no separation, but this great gain of cattle was causing them to become half men.

Didn't they realize that other people had cattle, and their cattle eat grass too? I don't know a lot about cattle, but I assume all cattle eats grass. All right? You could pay more money for cattle that eats something else, I'm sure, organic grass, right?

as opposed to the other kinds of grass, astral turf grass. And so, anybody would want that land. They wouldn't take that, but they said, you know, our cattle, they eat grass, and there's grass here. You can go take the land, and your cows can do whatever they want there.

And so, here we're concerned about generations to come, how they will view us, and that's wise. Do our kids see that the church has a mission in this world, or do they know that as a family, we are part of that has a mission?

Does Thatcher, my son, does he know that we go to a church that has a missions program, or does he know that as a family, we are part of that church, and that we have a mission? By being involved in it, generations to come shouldn't look back and say, we don't really know where our grandfather stood.

[7 : 49] I don't really know how my dad stood with Christ. I know that he went to church, but he wasn't really that involved. I know that he talked about the things of God, but I didn't ever really see him involved. There should be no confusion, and being involved in the mission, and swinging that sword of ours, makes it clear for generations to come, that we're not a divided people.

There's not a group of people in here that are on a mission, and another group of people that are just watching us on a mission. How much time do you spend trying to justify yourself, and others, that you really are a Christian, even though you do not seem to be identified with the people of God?

That's what our generation is known for, that we are offering a type of Christianity, that you don't have to do anything, and we can fill up buildings like that. And what they feared really happened. 1 Corinthians 22 and verse number 3, And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye not that Ramoth and Gilead, remember I told you to circle that name Gilead, in Numbers 32, is ours, and we be still, and take it not of the hand of the king, Assyria?

So they're having an argument there, they're like, Isn't that our land? Don't you remember? That's our land, because the children of Reuben, the children of Gilead, take it, and it was the first place to be taken by the enemy, and this is not the place you want to be at, when you play a game of risk.

If you're ever playing a game of risk, in this style, don't choose the land outside the Jordan, go inside with the promises that God had given. And so there's that confusion there.

[9 : 16] Their decision would discourage the others, it says in verse number 7, And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel, from going over into the land which the Lord had given them. So first of all, they weren't given that land, there was a land promised to them.

Second of all, it's a place that is going to be taken by the enemy. And third, it discourages all the people. They're going to do that. They're going to do just like their fathers had done. Verse number 14, they grew a number, which Moses ought to be excited about, but he says, He's risen up in your father's stead, an increase of sinful men.

Just like your fathers, you're an increase of sinful men, because you don't want to take God at His word, and claim His promises. You come into the land, and you look at it, and you say, that's great, but I don't want all the trouble that's involved in it.

Let's just stay outside, and claim the land that comes easy. If they stayed and didn't fight, they would have been guilty. Verse number 22 says, You will be guiltless before the Lord, which means that if they did not do that, then they would have been guilty of not seeing God for who He is, and claiming what He had.

And I hope by this point, you're asking the following questions. What is it in life that I should not be settling for? What is it in life that is offered to me that I should not be settling for?

[10 : 31] Also, what is it that I might be doing that would be discouraging my other brothers? And then lastly, concerning the mission of God, am I guiltless? Is it said that the way I live my life, that I'm guiltless concerning the mission of God?

The land was given to all people, so the responsibility lies with all people. If you want to know if you're guiltless in the battle, you don't need to look at your address. You need to see that if you fall someplace, you need to look down and see if there's a sword in your hand.

That's what He told them. He says, It's not about geography. You don't get out of this thing because you're going to choose an easier place. You will be guilty unless you go out there swinging the sword.

And they said, We will go for seven years until the job is completed. Don't look at your address in here today, but look down and see if you have a sword in your hand.

We often say things like this, that we don't have to go to the mission field to be involved in the work of the Lord. What's not your address that caused you not to be involved is the fact that you're not going anywhere.

[11 : 36] You're not going across the street. You're not going to the airport. You're just going about our days and we're not taking the sword because we've been given a land that doesn't require a sword and we're happy with it.

But it's disobedient there. Where you serve is not a decision that gets made in the recruitment office. It's a decision that's made by army leaders about men who have shown their ability and willingness to use their weapons.

Meaning that everybody in the battle, everybody in the church has a responsibility to teach the Word of God. These are our weapons and we're going to talk about the land that we're going to take. But you're going to let your brothers go to war, which means you're going to let other people get involved in the battle for the souls of men and you're going to sit back.

And the measure of our mission here, they had all been given the command and it would require all of them to claim it. They'd all been given the promise and it was going to require all of them to get it.

To disconnect from the mission was to disconnect from who they were. If they did not go forward, people would wonder if they were part of the group. Moses said, you're going to let your brother go to war and you're going to sit here.

[12 : 41] Could you imagine Moses' emotions and thoughts 40 years of waiting for this day, a place he desired to be with every fiber and his being, a place that had been given by God in heaven. And so how can they settle for so little?

Spurgeon says, it's the whole mission of the whole church to preach the whole counsel to the whole world. And we should be uncomfortable today with an incredibly high percentage of the people that have never heard the gospel.

that Brendan can land in Morocco and walk down the road and say, do you know Jesus? And they would say, I don't even know of his name. I don't know anything about him. Or maybe they know what's in the Quran.

But that ought to be a problem to us. The large portions of the world, what ought to equally be a problem to us, we ought to be uncomfortable with, is the high percentage of people sitting around who are not involved in the battle.

You should not be settling for a good seat on the sidelines. That is what you should be worried about missing out on. You should not be settled with just watching from the sidelines. You should not only go through foundations, but you should go and teach others with it.

[13 : 44] You should not only come to volunteers meeting, but you put those lessons to practice. You should take your sword, and you should swing it. And you shouldn't be settled with anything. You should not settle for anything else in life.

Moses accepts the proposal that's given, but it shows here the matter of obedience more than land. When they said, we will go forth, and we will fight with you, and we will take the land, and Moses said, that's fine.

As long as you're obedient in the battle, we're going to allow you to go back and take the land. Because this battle is not about land. This battle is about being obedient to the God of heaven. And for seven years, they go and do that until they claim it.

And it shows to this point of contention, came from an unwillingness for them to fight to take the land given to them. Because when they agreed, Moses gave in. And when Moses agreed, that that's what they should do.

And they fulfilled the commandment. And they kept, in Joshua 22, verse 2, and they kept all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded, and they obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you.

[14 : 40] They went, and they fought, and they claimed the land. And they learned the joy. It says, now the Lord has given you rest unto your brethren. Take diligent heed to keep the law, to love the Lord.

They learned the joy of knowing that God had used their life. after seven years in the battle, they get to go back to their land knowing that God had given them and their brothers rest.

Do you know the joy of serving in the battle? Do you know the rest is found when the job is being done and that you're part of it and that you're not just hearing about it from the other side of the river there or of the sea?

They could rest knowing they encouraged their brothers and did not discourage them. Nothing discourages your adult Bible fellowship teacher more or the missionary more to know that what they've given their lives to, you don't even give an afternoon to.

That people around you are giving their lives to serve. When our missionaries come here because they are the quintessential example or they should be of giving your lives completely and the fact they pack up and move and they're a great example, do they come here and are they encouraged?

[15 : 44] They won't be encouraged if we say you give your life to something that I can't even get out of my comfort zone for. If you just watch and never get involved, you're saying to others very loudly that you're giving your life to something that doesn't matter.

They could know that their sin would not find them out because they were free to walk in all of his ways. Aaron Bayshawar told me one time I was going through a real season of this discouragement and I was just very cranky and he said, as Aaron does so well, right Brendan?

He looked at me and he said, Trent, you know you're never going to be happy until you're obedient to sharing your faith in Christ. When was the last time you found somebody and told them about Jesus? I was ashamed at the time that I told him that.

He said, you're never going to be happy. There's not a form of Christianity that you find joy in that's outside of being obedient to Christ. That you have to be involved in what you know to be right.

And you know it's right and you know you should be involved and you want to be involved and you want to be involved and we should swing our sword. Young people in here, it's kind of funny there. All the teenagers that said that they made these cities for their little ones and their sheepfold.

[16 : 49] I listened to this message when my pastor preached world-evangelism.com. We always made fun of them because it looked like world minus evangelism which would be a different ministry all together.

And I remember either hearing it there the first time he preached and I remember him saying that they took a place and they put the little ones in a sheepfold or they put them in the cities and they put the animals in a sheepfold and I asked him, I said, how old were they who got to go with the battle and who had to stay behind?

And he said something to the extent, I don't know but you get to choose, don't you? You get to decide in here teenager if you're the ones that get put in the nursery or if you're going to fight and say, I'm not going to stay in here with people that just live according to animal instinct.

I don't care if there's USB charges for my iPod and the pasture is greener here. I am not going to just sit here. I'm going to fight out my way out of this. I'm going to grab a sword and I'm going to get the battle.

I'm not going to be labeled a kid. That's one of the great things about America. You get to choose when you want to be a man. We have what's called an extended adolescence. You become a man at 15 or you can live in your parents' basement until, I won't say a number, but you can live there for a long time drinking from a different bottle and never become a man.

[18 : 01] But because of the word of God, you can start the day. You can fight your way out of that. You can say, I want to do something for God. Some of the greatest things in my life, I saw as a teenager praying for a boy three times a week with my youth pastor that gets saved.

And the day that him, Sean, and Les went to an altar and they got saved is something I will never forget. When addiction started that day and I'll never get over it, I want to be used of God.

I want to swing my sword even when I don't know how to use it. I just want to keep and help other people and I want to learn how to use this thing. I want to make a difference in this world and I know that you do too because if you're a new creature, then you're a warrior.

That's the only thing he makes. He only makes warriors. And that is who you are. And don't let insecurity or anything else in this world keep you from this wonderful life.

Joe Olsteen, I'd love to tell you about the best life now. It includes taking up your sword and using it for the cause of Christ and doing something. You're not too young and you're not too old.

[19 : 03] But get out of your pasture and say, this is not where I'm supposed to be. I'm a warrior and I want to do something. And there's great gain in serving the Lord. Seek you first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.

You know what happened, Brother Myers, after seven years of fighting? They went back, it says here, wherefore if God so clothed them, it says, seek you first the kingdom of God. God clothes the grass and He'll take care of you.

He says, why do you worry about what you're eating? He says, why are you concerned about what the Gentiles, the unbelievers, are worried about? You know what happens when we're told in Joshua 22, verse number 8, after seven years of fighting, He spake to them, saying, return with much riches unto your tents and with your very much cattle with silver and with gold and with brass and with iron and with very much raiment.

Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren. He added much unto them. Seven years of fighting. They didn't discourage the brothers. They knew the joy of serving the Lord. They were obedient to God.

They were living out who they were made to be. And then on top of all of that, they came back with more cattle and more riches. You know what happens to a cow after seven years?

[20 : 10] They're almost dead. They only live like 15 years. Don't Google it. You're in church, okay? But after seven years, a cow's almost dead. So these people, these cows that had affected their decision, had influenced their decision making, after seven years, they come back and they didn't mean as much to them anymore.

Those cattle, they probably hated those things, looking at them. They probably talked to them. They said, I made poor decisions because of you. And the cow said, I'm a cow. Don't talk to me here.

All right? And so they returned there and the cattle they loved had grown old so much. And don't you want your own stories? Don't you want your own stories? I promise you, we're not going to get hit over the head and nobody's taking our land up here.

And so we won't get that story that Brother Austin tells. But we can have our own. We can see God work. We can see some teenagers saved in this church and raised up to serve Him and do remarkable things and you can be part of it and you can hear it.

And when they make updates like they did and you see in the video, you can say, I have a ministry in Thailand. I have a ministry in Spain because I invest in that person. And you can have it here right now because every one of you was made to be this type of warrior and to go to war.

[21 : 23] And what does obeying God for the portion look like for me and you? Mark 16, 15. Every creature. It's not a land. It's a heart. It's the hearts of all the men in the world and our job is not done until every man has had a presentation of the gospel how they have heard who Jesus Christ is and we work on that by multiplying ourselves and by going and by sending and training up people.

And to be quite honest, as I begin to pray here, our sin is finding us out. It really is. Every time a missions video comes up on a screen and it talks about Columbia and the millions of people there that haven't heard the gospel, it's our sin finding us out.

It's finding out that we were comfortable in our pastures and we forgot about a group of people and that we weren't living out who God made us to be. If the Christians, if churches, would live out who they would be, we wouldn't have those numbers.

We have more than enough. If we look at what we accomplish in the world of missions compared to the effort going forth, then we know the evangelization of the world is very much attainable.

So every time we hear it, we know our sin is coming back upon us. When we interview people in this town and we know they don't hear the gospel, it's the sin of generations before us coming home to roost and our sin has found us out.

[22 : 44] Storage units are an \$8 billion industry in our country. And so we are so preoccupied with gain and having to take care of it. But you know it isn't storage units and it isn't the wealthy.

It's me finding \$10 in my pocket and spending the next hour thinking about how I'll spend it instead of giving it to something else. It's me knowing that I'm going to get a few extra dollars this month and I'll spend it a million different ways.

You ever do that? You have \$50 extra coming so you can buy that thing that's \$30 here and \$20 in advance and \$20 more dollars and you spend that \$50 over and over again because it just eats up our mind because we love to have things and we love to take care of things and we love the Lord over things and we love to protect things because we are people that are made to do something.

We are made to be protectors and we're made to help care for things. But it isn't dumb cattle and it isn't dumb technology but it's this world is our garden.

It's the world that we've been given something to do. So don't just sit here. You have every right in the battle and don't let me or anybody else keep you from what God has given you to do.

[23 : 53] You have been given a command that requires the involvement of every believer. You will never feel like you belong to the people, the church, that you are supposed to belong to if you're not engaged in the warfare.

It just doesn't work. You cannot settle on one side of the water there and say I'm not going to be involved in the river but I want everybody to know we're part of it. It doesn't work like that because we have a missionary God and we're missionary people and because of that we're unified and doing something and not just looking like something.

And it will cause confusion to the generations coming after us if there is a division. You know, one of the reasons I want to be radical about my involvement in missions is because I want my great, great, great grandson to hear a clear presentation of the gospel.

And if I can't give my life to it right now, it's not going to be very clear in the generations to come. Do you understand what I'm saying? I know I don't say amen but if I heard that I would have.

Did you hear what I just said? If we don't really get involved in this thing we're going to make things confusing. God did not make a division and neither should you. He said, God, you made the division and he's like, no, no, no, I did not.

[25 : 03] You made that division and in your mind you said that those on this side of the river do something that the other people don't. There is no division in here and the work of the Lord.

There's different roles to be played but there's not a different mission for us to play in here. Not a goer and a sender does not have a different mission in this world. Not an old person to a young person.

Don't be looking just to the teenagers and say, I hope they grow up to do something for the Lord. They only will if they see us doing something for the Lord with our lives. And please, please, please don't discourage the heart of your brothers in the battle.

Get involved and swing your sword like never before because you were made to do it. When he made you, he made you for good works and that good work is to preach Jesus Christ unto the entire world starting with the next person you can find that will listen to you.

You have a sword, you've been created to be a warrior and don't let anybody tell you that you should stay on the sideline. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word and thank you for how clear it is.

[26 : 09] Father, forgive me where I've been so satisfied with watching and cheering on a group of people knowing that you have a work for me to do. Lord, my prayer right now is for my brothers and sisters in this room and I know that in their heart they scream that they want to do something as our pastor puts it.

Lord, I know that they want their sword to taste blood. They want their lives to count because you did something to them when you saved them. You saved us for a purpose and we want to live it out with no division.

We want to be all in and we want generations to come to know where we stood concerning you and your mission. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia.

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