

Be Sure

Numbers 32:23



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FOCAL Read Together Numbers 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

Why does God raise up a people? It is so that:

Psalms 86:9-10 All nations whom {God} hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. {10} For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.

God is worthy of praise and glory and honor. God wants every creature who is in Heaven and on the earth to give all blessing and honor and glory and power unto Him Who sits upon the Throne, and unto His Son forever (Revelation 5:13). He saves a people so that they can worship and serve Him. He saves a people so that they can go into unbelieving lands and take those lands for the Lord.

God saved Israel because He made a promise to Abraham many years before. God raised up Israel so that she could enter the Promised Land and carry the Name of God into an unbelieving wilderness. God saves His people so that they can be *world changers* – so that they can go forth in His power and as His ambassadors and make a difference. We are called – if we believe in Him – to make a difference for God's sake.

God told His people “if you will not do (what I told you to do) you have sinned against Me – and be sure that your sin shall find you out”. I have heard preachers misuse this text and apply it to violations of

God's Ten Commandments. They have said “if you lie, your sin shall find you out. If you murder or commit sexual sin, your sin shall find you out”. Though that's Biblically true – **the wages of sin always brings death (Romans 6:23)** – that is not the intent of this particular passage. This passage addresses the sin of doing nothing.

The other day I had just finished shining my shoes when – to my dismay – I couldn't find the lid of the shoe polish! This was a liquid polish, and if I left the lid off I might as well throw the whole bottle away. I looked high and low for that lid until, suddenly, I realized I was looking for the wrong thing. The shoe polish I used to use had a *clear plastic lid* – and that's what I was looking for. The polish I now use has a *black plastic lid*. As soon as I realized I was looking for the wrong thing, I opened my eyes and – behold (as the Bible says) there it was! It had been in front of me the whole time.

The unbelieving people do not believe in God because they're looking for the wrong thing. For some of them “God” is a great big Santa Claus in the sky Who exists for no other reason than to give them more and better toys. For others “God” is a miracle machine or a rabbit's foot. His sole reason for being is to make us better when we're sick, or to make the boogie man get out from under the bed at night. Still others think “God” is a good old boy, easy going, who loves it when you are being entertained. This good old boy concept of “God” is one of the most popular ideas in America today. People think “If it feels good, do it – God doesn't mind”. All these people are looking for something, but they're not looking for the “God” of the Bible.

We who are truly Christians have found God, and have found Him to be loving and faithful to all that He has promised. We know that the God of the Bible is not a Cosmic Santa Claus, a Rabbit's Foot, or a Good Old Boy. We know that God is Infinite, Eternal, Holy, and demands of all that we turn unto Jesus Christ by faith and trust our very existence unto Him. We know that **we who have received Jesus have been given power to become Sons of God. We have been born again into the Kingdom of God (John 1:12-13)**. We who are Sons of God by faith have been called of God to **go into all the world preaching and teaching the Gospel, baptizing all who repent in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20)**. Jesus Christ has all power, and He has called His Church to obediently go, to do, to baptize, to be an example. We who are His now **walk in His Spirit, and walk in the Light (Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:4)**.

Hence this warning, dear believer – heed it well. Part of Israel wanted to stay on *this side* of the Jordan, to tend their cattle and their sheep while the rest of Israel went into the Promised Land. In the same way there are many who call themselves “Christian” who have become apathetic and complacent in their faith. They are like Cain who, when questioned, say “**am I my brother's keeper?**” They believe that they have done all that God requires of them. They themselves are saved by faith in Christ, so now – inoculated against hell – they need do nothing else. Some Christians have even told their pastors “that's why we hire you. It's your job to tell others about Jesus, not ours. Do your job Preacher”. What a terrible idea! One man cannot be the Church, no

more than one Moses could be Israel. The Church is called to be the Church. The Church is commissioned by God to **go into all the world**. The Pastor is called by God to love the Church, to feed the Church the good Word of God, and – yes – to tell others about Jesus (**Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:12**). But God's Church must go forward – in one accord and to glorify God – else the land will never turn its heart to God.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

Misuse of God's Blessings Can Take Our Eyes Off Of God

Up to this point in her history God has blessed Israel richly, even though she had been aimlessly wandering in the desert. **Og, the King of Bashan** came out to attack God's wandering nation, and the Lord told His Israel:

Numbers 21:34-35 ... Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land;... they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.

Even crippled by the curse of God, Israel was *still God's people* and the Lord had no intention of letting the unbeliever hurt His Beloved. There's another great principle here, I believe. Though God's local Church has often fallen and been bruised by this world, it is yet His Church. Hasn't Jesus promised us:

Matthew 16:18 ... upon this rock I will build my

church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The Church - even crippled by sin - is the Church, and Israel – even crippled by sin – is Israel. Touch not God's own!

Anyway, the **King of Bashan** as well as **Sihon** attacked Israel – and lost badly. Israel defeated these nations because they **went before the Lord**. Each tribe took the spoils of war – a huge amount of cattle and sheep – and were going to enter the Promised Land rich. What has God promised His people?

Matthew 6:31-33 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? {32} (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. {33} But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

If you will seek **God first** – and His **righteousness by faith in Christ** – then He will take care of you.

Israel seeking God's face was delivered from Egypt. Israel leaving Egypt took from the ...

Exodus 12:35-36 ... Egyptians jewels of silver, and

jewels of gold, and raiment: {36} And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

God blesses His children by fulfilling their needs – as long as they are obedient to Him. It was a rich Israel that prepared to cross the Jordan when two of the tribes – **Reuben and Gad** – came to Moses with a proposition.

“We have a lot of cattle, and we need good pasture to graze our herds. We don’t care about taking the Land of Canaan – we’re just as happy right here. Would it be all right if we stayed on *this side* of the Jordan, and let the rest of Israel enter the Promised Land without us?” What did Moses tell them? He said:

CONTEXT Numbers 32:6-7 ... **Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? {7} And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?**

How dare you consider such a thing! Your actions will discourage the rest of Israel! God has set the land before you and has promised to help you take it. Further, Moses said,

CONTEXT Numbers 32:15 **For if ye turn away from after {serving God}, He will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.**

Moses said, “Don't you remember the forty years we

wandered in the wilderness, while several million of God's people died in the desert? Don't you remember your mommas and daddies and grandmas and grandpas dying miserable deaths as we circled aimlessly? Don't you remember it was but *ten spies who failed to serve the Lord* who brought this terror upon us all? If two TRIBES refuse to go, don't you think God will purge us all?” Reuben and Gad then repented and made a different type of offer. They said, in effect, “We will cross the Jordan and work with our brothers and sisters. We will work with God to take all of Canaan. We will encourage others to this work. And, when we're done, we want to come back to this side of the Jordan where we can tend our sheep and cattle in peace”. Moses – and God – agreed to that proposal. May I point out a couple of rather obvious principles – applications that every Christian should take to heart.

The “toys” that God has allowed us must never take precedent over worshipful obedience to Him.

APPLICATION God doesn't mind you having “your possessions” - as long as you serve Him first. Gad and Reuben were allowed to come back across the Jordan and take land *not in Canaan* – but they had to serve the Lord first. In our world today there are so many people with the mindset that “he who has the most toys is the most blessed” - but Beloved, that's not so. If your joy is in a thing then when that thing breaks your joy is broken. Jesus said:

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that **my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full¹.**

God wants us to have a **full** or **overflowing** joy – but that is not possible if our joy is in temporal things. **Your life does not consist of your possessions (Luke 12:15).**

That fancy car you drive with the expensive rims will be sitting down here on the earth when you go to meet your Maker. The only chariots I read of in the Scripture are the ones that Pharaoh's Army drove to its death in the Red Sea, and the “Chariot of Fire” that was sent by God to take God's man to Heaven (**2 Kings 2:11**). It's better to put your efforts into serving God, not your toys.

APPLICATION God must *always be first in the hearts of His people*. The Gadites and the Reubenites though **“What does it harm if we stay here and let the rest go on their merry way? We're not hurting anybody. Hey, if it feels good, let's do it! Whatever works for me is right.”** This might be a common attitude among the unbelieving Canaanite, but it has no place in the heart of a Son of God.

1 Aorist Passive Subjunctive of G4137, πληρόω, plēroō, *play-ro'-o*, From G4134; to *make replete*, that is, (literally) to *cram* (a net), *level up* (a hollow), or (figuratively) to *furnish* (or *imbue, diffuse, influence*), *satisfy, execute* (an office), *finish* (a period or task), *verify* (or *coincide* with a prediction), etc.: - accomplish, X after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.

God told a unified ISRAEL to take the land – not just ten tribes. God tells His CHURCH to go – teach – observe – baptize. In effect we take the land for God's sake.

The Bible says **“there is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12)**. The unbelieving knows no other way but death. We must show them the way of life by faith in Jesus Christ! If we do not go together – unified in the power of Jesus – then the warning applies to us as it did to Israel.

FOCAL Numbers 32:23 **But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.**

America is where it is today because God's Church has not tried to *take the land for the Lord*. Too often we have focused on the temporal toy rather than the Eternal Father. **Our sin has found us out**. Soft pornography is common on television, evil abounds. Inactivity in every local Church has caused the Church to lose ground. Yet God is faithful. If we will **go before the Lord** we can take this land for Jesus. We must – however – be unified as believers in Christ and with Christ.

Go Before The Lord – In His Power

ILLUSTRATE Many years ago the Eastern American Indian tribes required their young people to “count coup” on a bear or a wildcat before they admitted that young

man to warrior status. The way the young brave “counted coup” was to run up and slap the ferocious beast in the face – then run away before he was mauled. Some braves succeeded – others failed. You see, some days you got the bear, but other days the bear got you! There are many believers today who do nothing because they consider the state of Canaan to be *out of control* in America. They plaintively say “**But what can I do?**” Other believers step out in their own strength and try to “count coup” on the bear of sin. In most cases, we can do nothing *in our own power* against the Canaan that grips us. Sometimes you get the bear – and sometimes the bear gets you!

We need to remember that which Moses told the Gadites and the Reubenites: Go Before² The Lord.

Look how many times Moses uses that phrase “**before the Lord**”.

2 H6440, פָּנִים, pānīm, paw-neem', Plural (but always used as a singular) of an unused noun (פָּנֶה pāneh, paw-neh'; from 6437); the *face* (as the part that *turns*); used in a great variety of applications (literally and figuratively); also (with prepositional prefix) as a preposition (*before*, etc.): - + accept, a (be-) fore (-time), against, anger, X as (long as), at, + battle, + because (of), + beseech, countenance, edge, + employ, endure, + enquire, face, favour, fear of, for, forefront (-part), form (-er time, -ward), from, front, heaviness, X him (-self), + honorable, + impudent, + in, it, look [-eth] (-s), X me, + meet, X more than, mouth, of, off, (of) old (time), X on, open, + out of, over against, the partial, person, + please, presence, prospect, was purposed, by reason, of, + regard, right forth, + serve, X shewbread, sight, state, straight, + street, X thee, X them (-selves), through (+ -out), till, time (-s) past, (un-) to (-ward), + upon, upside (+ down), with (-in, + stand), X ye, X you.

CONTEXT Numbers 32:20 ... if ye will **go armed before the LORD to war,**

CONTEXT Numbers 32:21 And will **go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD,** until he hath driven out his enemies from before him,

CONTEXT Numbers 32:22 And the land **be subdued before the LORD:** then afterward ye shall return, and **be guiltless before the LORD,** and before Israel; and this land shall **be your possession before the LORD.**

In *three verses* the phrase “**before the Lord**” is used *five times*. In fact, this phrase is used *thirty eight times* in the Book of Numbers alone. What is its significance?

We have no power in ourselves to change the land – but the power is in God. Go “before the Lord” - and God is always behind what you do if you do it at His direction and according to His Word.

Jesus was teaching one day when a distraught man came to Him, and said:

Matthew 17:15-16 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. {16} And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

This father had a son that could not be reached. Think about this: **he is a lunatic** – his mind is gone, so he cannot be reached with reason. The **disciples could not cure him**. The Gospel of Mark tells us that the father also said:

Mark 9:17-18 ... my son, which hath a dumb³ spirit; {18} And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

The text literally states that they boy had a “**mute spirit**”. He was out of his mind, deaf and dumb, and whenever someone tried to talk to him the **mute spirit taketh him, and teareth him, and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth**. Just as it is with many unbelievers the devil causes them to become agitated when we try to tell them about Jesus. This boy could not be reached by conventional means. What was the solution that Jesus offered? He said:

Matthew 17:17-18 ... bring him hither to me. {18} And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

Only God can take Canaan – only God can heal the soul possessed of spiritual death. When we go into the world as the Lord commanded, we go – not in our own power – but fully trusting in His power. His rebuke can cast out Satan and the power of darkness. God alone can take the

3 G216, ἄλαλος, alalos, al'-al-os, From G1 (as a negative particle) and G2980; *mute*: - dumb.

land – but we must **go before the Lord**. To us the **daughter is dead (Mark 5:35) – why both the Master any further?** Death has taken her. She cannot see, cannot hear, cannot feel. What can we say or do? But the Lord says “**do not trust your senses – the damsel is only sleeping, she's not dead. Talitha cumi – arise My child**”- and the child lives once more.

Luke 7:12 Now when {Jesus} came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

What can we do? The young man is dead – he cannot be reached by our power. No medicine can heal him, no doctor can reach him, no mortal can take him back from a state of hopeless death. Yet we **go before the Lord into the land**. We watch Him as He raises this young man from the dead, and we praise Jesus and magnify His Name as we gather in the Church and go out into the world. We do as Scripture bids:

Hebrews 2:12-17 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. {13} And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. {14} Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; {15} And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. {16} For verily he took not on him the

nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. {17} Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Beloved, our trust must be in Jesus and Jesus alone. We must always **go before the Lord** if we expect to take the land for Him. We must always **go before the Lord** if we expect to see our loved ones saved, and our households converted for His glory.

The Jesus that heals the deaf mute and raises the dead can touch the life that we cannot touch. Point to Christ, love Him, tell others about Him, be unified – UNIFIED – in Him – and we will take the land by faith. Remember these words:

FOCAL Numbers 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

These words were not written to murderers, nor to thieves, nor to liars, nor to adulterers or sexual sinners. These words were written to God's Israel and – by extension – to God's people. These words were written to the Israelite who wanted to do nothing but tend his sheep and cattle, and these words are written to the Christian who wants to do nothing but tend his lawn and his family. **Be sure your sin will find you out.** Sin brings with it death - **“the wages of sin is death”** - it always brings death. The sin of doing nothing – of **receiving the**

Grace of God in vain – of not using the power God has given you – lets others stay in spiritual death. The Apostle himself said:

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

God gave Israel grace so she could cross the Jordan and take the land for Him. God gave you grace so that you could go out and make a difference by telling others about Jesus.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.