

Subject: *The Call of Duty*

Scripture: *Numbers 32:1-7, 16-23*

We honor our veterans for their commitment and courage in answering the call to duty. We appreciate their dedication and sacrifice for our country and our freedom. The Bible reminds us that God's people have a call to duty and it is our responsibility to answer that call. We need to understand what's going on in this passage of Scripture.

The Book of Numbers gets its name from the numbering of the people in chapter 1 and chapter 26. These were censuses of men 20 years old and up who were able to go to war. Israel was preparing to enter the Promised Land and claim the land God gave them.

1. THE DESIRE OF THE PEOPLE (vs. 1-5)

The two tribes of Reuben and Gad had great herds of livestock and the land east of Jordan River was good grazing land, so they asked for permission to settle down there and not go over into Canaan. They were more concerned about raising their cattle than claiming Canaan. They were carnally minded instead of spiritually minded. Some people are like these tribes. They have gone as far as they want to go in their spiritual life. They are saved and content to just settle down where they are.

2. THE DANGER OF THE PEOPLE (vs. 6-7)

This generation was too young to remember what happened about 40 years earlier, so Moses reminded them of a little history. He told them about what happened when the people were discouraged and didn't enter the Promised Land. Moses warned them that their actions would discourage others. He said in effect (vs. 6): "No man has a right to be at ease when his brothers are at war." What we do affects others. United we stand, and divided we fall. We must be concerned about how our actions and attitudes affect others.

3. THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE (vs. 16-23)

The two tribes of Reuben and Gad made a promise to help the other tribes fight the battles and claim their land on the west side of Jordan. Only then would they return to their families and their flocks on the east side. In verses 21-22, Moses agrees to their plan, but then in verse 23, he warns them about the consequences if they don't follow through. Failure to do their duty would be a sin against God. It would be a sin of omission. The Bible describes different kinds of sins: sins of ignorance and willful sins; sins of action and sins of attitude; sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit; sins of commission and sins of omission. When we fail to do what we ought to do, we commit sin against God.

We must understand how important it is to fulfill our duty. In the military we used to call it AWOL (absent without leave), and now it's called UA (unauthorized absence), and you get in big trouble. On the job unexcused absences are not acceptable. The same is true in school. But in church it's a different matter. People don't feel a sense of duty and responsibility to the Lord and to the church. They don't always like to feel they are accountable.

On Veterans Day we honor the men and women who have served or are serving our country. We don't honor draft dodgers and deserters, but we honor those who heard and answered the call of duty. If you are a Christian, you're a soldier in the Lord's army. Will you be faithful to the call of duty?