

# God's Limits On the Military

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, June 26th 2022

## I. Introduction - why preach on military when most of us aren't in the military?

We are going to take two weeks to go through all the lessons of verses 10-18. Next week I will make some applications to totally different areas of life than the military. But today I want to look at the most obvious lessons. I won't always draw out the military and civic lessons that *could* be drawn out from this book, but the ones in *this* section are so important that I think they must be covered.

And I'll just give three examples of why you should be interested. This past July the Senate passed a bill that would require women to sign up for selective service so that (in the event of a draft) all women 18 years old and older could be forced into the military - yes, forced. Thankfully there was enough outcry from the public that the Congressional version of the bill removed that language - but not by a large margin. This year or next year we could have a bill that makes it mandatory for all girls 18 or over to sign up.

Anyway, the summary of the Senate bill said that it "amends the Military Selective Service Act to require the registration of women for Selective Service." And if you read the fine print of the Selective Service, it would have been a felony for any of your daughters to not sign up. Well, suddenly this passage becomes very relevant because it gives us a basis for conscientious objection. Our denomination actually anticipated this some years ago, and we wrote into our denominational constitution the following words:

It is not lawful for women to serve in military service, except for voluntary acts of mercy. It is not lawful for the civil government to draft women into the military or to require them to register for potential draft into civil or military service. (Deuteronomy 20:5-20; 1 Timothy 2:12; Titus 2:5; Numbers 1-2; cf. rebuke in 1 Samuel 8:13, 16; cf. implications of Numbers 30)

So that's one reason this sermon is very applicable. Let me give you another. Our denomination's constitution has another provision that relates to another point we will look at. It seeks to protect the *men* in our denomination with these words:

It is allowed for Christian men to refuse to serve in the military when in the judgment of the general assembly, the military's action (including but not limited to wars declared and undeclared, police actions, any international peacekeeping missions, or sustained military engagements) is deemed unjust (1 Samuel 20; 22:1- 5; Psalm 110:3; cf. the implications of the voluntarism of Deuteronomy 20:5-9; Judges 5:2).

Let me give a third reason why this sermon is relevant to you young men. If every adult male is part of the militia as the Bible says, and if they are supposed to *already* be ready for conflict at a moment's notice *before* they are conscripted into the army, then that has huge

implications. The Bible expects each one of you young men to own one or more weapons, to learn how to use those weapons safely, and to be willing to defend your family and your country should we come under attack. And if you hate guns and your weapon of choice is a club, a sword, or something else, be sure you know how to use it effectively. Don't just use that as an excuse. This is not just a theoretical question. It's a Biblical issue.

So those are three of several reasons why these military principles are not just for our military members. They have *immediate* relevance to every one of your lives.

## II. Background. Verse 10 implies an already existing structure of military officers (that had been established in the book of Numbers)

But before we dive into the passage, let me give you some absolutely essential background information. Verse 10 mentions officers and the following verses show a structure of the army and its divisions that assumes that both officers and military structure already existed. Where did that start? It started in the book of Numbers. Joshua is basically assuming that you have already read the book of Numbers and know the military principles mandated there. And if you turn to Numbers 1, I want to quickly introduce you to a small handful of the military organizational principles that directly relate to our chapter and to our liberty.

Numbers 1:2 says,

**Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their father's houses, according to the number of names, every male individually.**

In this verse we see first of all that God never authorized a census of females or children - never. And the reason becomes obvious as you continue reading - the army was an all-male-army, and the only reason for a census was to establish what male fighters were available for an impending war.

Second, we see that though there was connectionalism in the country, the census always took into account the tribal distinctions, and within those tribal distinctions the authority of clans. The army didn't mix people up from regions into a melting pot. And we will see the significance of this in a bit. So there are two principles in that verse.

Verse 3 says, **"from twenty years old and above - all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies."** First, notice the minimum age for joining the army was not 18 (as in our selective service). It was twenty. Sometimes young people join the military before they are prepared. So there was a minimum age of adulthood. That didn't mean that younger ones couldn't train or couldn't defend their homes in times of emergency, but they were not treated as adults until the age of 20.

Second, the word "able" indicates that not all males adults went to war. For example, there were several exceptions that Deuteronomy laid out - if you had been married within the

previous year, or you were part of the clergy, or you had other responsibilities that could not be relinquished, or you were just fearful. It was pretty easy to get out of military service if you chose to do so. In contrast, America's *current* selective service makes it a felony not to sign up, and that *should* be changed. We should pressure our Congress to change that. God only wanted valiant men who would not turn their backs in the heat of battle.

Third, notice the plural word "armies." Each state (or tribe) had its own army that could be contributed to the overall mustered army of Israel. That is hugely significant in protecting against tyranny. If a tyrant like Saul or like Ahab were to get into power, the regional armies and local militias were able to refuse to serve. America used to be structured that way with soldiers serving under regional standards, and sometimes even wearing regional uniforms. It's not that way anymore. Tyrants don't like checks and balances to their power. The Bible does. And we need to get back to at least the constitutional limits to our military, or better yet, the Biblical limits. Our military is *way* too centralized.

Verse 4 says, "**And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house.**" Moses' war council included the head of state from each state of Israel (whether he liked those men or not). The war council was not just the king's chosen men. He had to take into consideration states' rights. And if he didn't want the leader from that tribe, then he didn't have that tribe's militia. Those tribal leaders were the buffer between the federal government and the regional government. And he lists those names in the next verses.

Now let's skip down a bit. When the army actually gathered, it says in verse 20: "**Now the children of Reuben, Israel's oldest son, their genealogies by their families, by their father's house, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:**" And he continues with the other tribes. But notice that they were not only organized by tribe; they were also organized by clans. America had something similar in its system of counties, and it was a huge check and balance against the imperialistic tendencies of the executive office, which often sought to have exclusive loyalty of the army - and thus their tendency to mix people up into a big melting pot military.

Look at Numbers 2:2. "**Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house...**" There was a far greater degree of regional loyalty than of federal loyalty that God was ensuring. Each state and clan had its own flag *and followed that flag*. If the tribal leadership felt that a given war was not in the best interests of their tribe or clan, or that the federal government was usurping its power, or engaging in tyranny, this loyalty to region became a deterrent. Many times those tribes or states interposed themselves in order to protect their citizens. And the same was true in early America. Just as one illustration - there wasn't a lot that George Washington could do when the Vermont militia refused his orders to invade and conquer Canada on the grounds that this was imperialism - that their battle wasn't with Canada. And there are many other ingenious checks and balances found in the book of Numbers - some of which found their way into early American civics.

If you keep reading in Numbers you will discover that the purpose for the census was not to forecast economic growth, or to collect taxes, or to control the people. In fact, the Bible valued privacy and resisted the intrusion of the civil government into family affairs. That's why David was judged so heavily by God when he did his census that was not related in any way to a current war, and why that census was so revolting to Joab. Interestingly, the kind of all encompassing census that the American government engages in today makes David's offense seem tiny. The modern American census is ungodly; it is intrusive; it is tyrannical. And it also happens to be unconstitutional. But be that as it may, this census was strictly for a military semi-voluntary draft during a time of war.

Now, with that background, let's look at Joshua 1 and quickly go through eleven principles that every Christian citizen should be aware of.

### III. Principles applied to military

#### A. Standing officer structure (v. 10) , but not a large standing army (vv. 10, 15, etc.)

Verse 10 says, **“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying...”** This first principle was that there was always a standing officer structure. This may not seem particularly significant until you realize that Numbers and Deuteronomy both mandate that there must not be a standing army - and that verse 15 of Joshua 1 indicates that there was no standing army. Notice that it doesn't say that Joshua commands the officers of the *army*. No, he commands the officers of the *people*. There was no army until the regional militias were mobilized.

So if there is no standing army except during time of war, why the standing officers? Because (as we will see in a moment) it enabled an army to be mustered within three days through the organized militias that were in place. Thus there didn't need to be a standing army. And in order to organize the people quickly, there had to be standing officers. There could be no quick mobilization by Joshua or by any king without a standing officer structure.

And America adopted that in the early days. A lot of early American civics flowed from the Bible and was a complete contradiction of European civics. Did you know that the right to appoint officers in the military is reserved to the States, just like in Israel? Let me read a portion from article I, section 8 of our constitution. It says, “reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress” (clause 16). So the appointing of officers and the training of the militia was left to the states. States rights with regard to the militia got hugely changed in 1918 according to Edwin Meese, and these checks and balances got gradually evaporated.

Did you realize that our constitution does not allow for a standing army except during time of war? That was the same as in Israel. America has gotten around that by creating conflicts around the world, or being in a perpetual state of cold war (during the the Soviet Union

era), or by inventing new wars to be a part of, but mainly just by ignoring the literal meaning of the Constitution. But the comments of our founding fathers make it crystal clear that our Constitution was trying to *prevent* the use of a standing army, and all of them hated a standing army. They feared that (unlike a navy which was used primarily for defense against outsiders, that) a standing army could be used against the citizens - and *has* been used against the citizens. And if you want to find out what our founding fathers meant, get the multi-volume *Founder's Constitution*. It goes phrase by phrase through the Constitution and quotes founding fathers on exactly what it meant.

There was a restriction in Article I, section 8 to the time an army could be employed. Section 8 says, "To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;" Notice the words "armies" (plural) and the specification of two years. It's been a long time since we've had armies (plural) and since we obeyed the mandate of two years. They gave a specified time period after which the army must be disbanded. Why? Because they greatly feared a standing army. James Madison, who is called the "Chief Architect of the Constitution" and who was America's fourth president, said this: "A standing army is one of the greatest mischiefs that can possibly happen."<sup>1</sup> What we have today is said by him to be one of the greatest mischiefs that could possibly happen. Mr. Mason, at the same assembly said, "But when once a standing army is established in any country, the people lose their liberty."<sup>2</sup> In the debates, Governor Randolph agreed, saying, "With respect to a standing army, I believe there was not a member in the federal Convention, who did not feel indignation at such an institution. [He was saying that this was a unanimous opinion. He goes on:] What remedy, then, could be provided? Leave the country defenceless? In order to provide for our defence, and exclude the dangers of a standing army, the general defence is left to those who are the objects of defence. It is left to the militia, who will suffer if they become the instruments of tyranny."<sup>3</sup> I'm quoting these founders of America because the modern propaganda machine denies that the Constitution outlaws a standing army. Alexander Hamilton said, "Standing armies are dangerous to liberty."<sup>4</sup> And such quotes could be multiplied by other founding fathers who would describe our current standing armies as proof-positive that we are in a state of tyranny. And though I support our military men, I do not support the overgrown

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<sup>1</sup> See Debates, Virginia Ratifying Convention, 1787, on Article 1, Section 8, Clause 12. [https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1\\_8\\_12s27.html](https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_12s27.html) It can also be found here <https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/adeffillofrights/chapter/virginia-ratifying-convention-on-a-standing-army/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Federalist papers No. 29.

[https://ballotpedia.org/Federalist\\_No.\\_29\\_by\\_Alexander\\_Hamilton\\_\(1788\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Federalist_No._29_by_Alexander_Hamilton_(1788)) This can also be found on many other sites.

military that has emerged since World War I. It is an unconstitutional military in many ways. It is certainly an unbiblical one.

Anyway, by the time we get done with this sermon I think you will have a tremendous appreciation for the checks and balances that were present in early America and you will be angry that none of those checks and balances are present today - at least you should be angry. Of course, the Bible called for even more limited civil government than the Constitution does. But it is clear that our nation has come a long ways from our early somewhat Biblical roots into more and more centralization and less and less accountability to the local government.

But rather than getting frustrated, we can do something about it. And one practical way to push back is to get involved at the local level. If you want to influence your government in a godly direction, start emphasizing relationships and influence at the local level. There is coming a time when state and local officials are going to be far more important to our freedoms than national government officials ever will be - and especially if we get hit by an EMP or other disaster.

Verse 15 speaks of the disbanding of the armies after war was finished. It says,

*until* the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise.

Notice that word "until." Once the war was over, the military went back to their flocks, fields, and families. God did not want the civil government to be a perpetual war machine - which is what America has become. OK, I'll get off that rant.

### B. The regional officers mobilize the militias (vv. 1-12,14)

Another hint at how ungodly our military has become can be seen in verses 10-12. Verse 10 makes clear that all the words of these verses were given to the *officers* of the people. Joshua did not directly command the people. He worked through a chain of command, and the first level of that chain was regional officers. Verse 11 shows that these *regional* officers were asked to mobilize these militias: **"Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'**" And then in verse 12 he makes mention of three regional divisions. And in verse 14 in the middle it says that those tribes were to **"pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them."** They were to pass before them and help them, *implying that they fought as separate units.*

This principle of maintaining regional units in the army distresses those who want a strong central government because when militias keep regional differences and ideological differences afire they do not provide a melting pot. Sadly, you no longer find our national military grouping its units by regions at all. By the way, the Anti-Federalists like Patrick Henry (whom I identify with much more anyway) wanted even more regionalism than the

Constitution gave. They agreed with the Bible when they said that the militia should be under state or even county control, not the control of the congress. A compromise was made, allowing *some* control by Congress - but not very much. But in the Militia Act of 1792, Congress unconstitutionally authorized the president to federalize the militia to some degree.<sup>5</sup> But even with that, militias still maintained their own units within the army and their own banners all the way up until the end of the War Between the States.

As another historical side note of interest - this principle of maintaining regional structure within the military has informed the balance of powers of virtually every Calvinistic country in history. Why the Calvinistic countries? Because their belief in man's sin-nature made them not trust citizens or civic officers with too much power. Switzerland still has the vestiges of this system of checks and balances in place. In that nation, every male is armed, trained, and ready to go to battle. They have their military weapons right in their homes. And the militias are local, and there is a balance of power between the Cantons and the central government. It's still quite good there, though not as good as it used to be.

### C. No female draft (v. 14) – men must have valor, manliness

I've already introduced the next point. We already saw in Numbers that only adult males were enlisted. But let's read verse 14 to see how that is worded here. **"Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them."** Many people think that there is nothing in Scripture that prohibits women from serving in the army. They say that just because it commands men does not mean that it prohibits women. And they will use examples like Jael in Judges 4 to do away with the clear commands in Numbers and other places. But that is bad hermeneutics because historical examples must be interpreted in light of a command, not vice versa. And this verse shows a command of God that women *not* be involved in the military. He's not just saying that women shouldn't serve on the front lines of the battlefield - as many pastors today are arguing. No. God is saying that they had to stay *home*. Let me read it. "Your wives and little ones shall remain in the land..." That's not a suggestion. It's a command based on Deuteronomy 20 and other passages that you can find in our denomination's constitution.

So, what difference should this make? Well, if you have friends or relatives who are females wanting to serve in the military, try to discourage them. That is not a good idea. And for sure, write your Senators and Congressmen before a female draft bill comes up, and tell them that you are opposed to females being included in selective service or a draft. Imagine

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<sup>5</sup> "[W]henver the United States shall be invaded, or be in imminent danger of invasion from any foreign nation or Indian tribe, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States to call forth such number of the militia of the state, or states most convenient to the place of danger, or scene of action, as he may judge necessary to repel such invasion, and to issue his orders for that purpose to such officer or officers of the militia, as he shall think proper."

what would happen if both father and mother were drafted. Imagine the difficulty that men (who are used to protecting women) would have when they are fighting with and fighting against women. It destroys that protective impulse. Think of how this affects the respect historically offered to women. It destroys that respect. But beyond that, training standards have deteriorated in order to accommodate women, and it is lessening the military's readiness. Immorality is high. Abortions are high. I talked with a chaplain who said that he was forced to sleep in the same tent with females. And his complaints about this were rebuffed by the commander. And *now* with the introduction of LGBTQ+ nonsense, it is going to be increasingly difficult to serve.

What's God's mandate for the army? It is repeatedly stated to be **mighty men of valor...** (1:14; 6:2; 8:3; 10:7; etc). Men whose roar makes the enemy tremble. Men whose authority carry's weight. Men whose strength is often challenged to the nth degree. Next week I will make some broader applications of that verse, but let's go on to the fourth principle.

#### **D. All male citizens 20 years old and up were to have arms and were in the militia in times of peace and in the army when at war (v. 14)**

Verse 14 reinforces that men, all men, were supposed to *already* be equipped with fighting tools before they came to serve in the army. The federal government did not supply those fighting tools. The tribes did not supply those fighting tools. That didn't mean that they couldn't, but the biblical mandate was for *private* ownership of fighting tools (not just hunting tools - weapons).

People think that it is different in America. But actually, the original intent of the Second Amendment indicates otherwise - and we should always interpret the Constitution in terms of original intent. I listened to a talk show host who was saying that the "experts" agree that the second amendment doesn't give the people the right to bear arms. The host said (and I quote), "It's talking about the military and the national guard having that right." Wait a minute! Were the men who wrote that amendment really worried that the military might have their weapons confiscated? No. You don't need a bill of rights to protect the army's right to carry arms. The bill of rights was written to protect the citizens, not to ensure that an army gets enough guns. It's ridiculous, and yet it's the standard modern anti-gun line. If the words "militia" and "people" meant military, then America would have been no different than the totalitarian states it was opposing. And you read the discussions and they recognized that this Biblical concept was unique to America at that time.

Eidsmoe and others have shown that the founding fathers referred to the Scriptures over and over on this and other issues, and they made clear that unlike non-Calvinistic nations, the militia was every adult male citizen. George Mason said, "I ask you sir, who are the militia? They consist now of the whole people."<sup>6</sup> Patrick Henry said, "The great object is

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Elliot, *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, J.B. Lippincott & co. (Philadelphia: 1836-59), pp. 425-426.



that every man be armed. Everyone who is able might have a gun.”<sup>7</sup> Richard Henry Lee (who helped frame the second amendment) said, “A militia, when properly formed, are in fact the people themselves...and include all men capable of bearing arms... To preserve the liberty it is essential that the whole body of the people always possess arms and be taught alike how to use them.”<sup>8</sup> Do you males have arms? Do you know how to use them? It’s a biblical call. It’s also the call of the second amendment.

And by the way, though men are mandated to have weapons, we shouldn’t go to the opposite extreme and say (like some people do) that women are prohibited from ever using a weapon in self-defense. There is no prohibition in the Bible to that effect. Indeed, the woman Jael is *praised* by God in Judges 5 when she killed a general who came into her tent. There is no reason why you women cannot be taught how to shoot. A gun is a great equalizer, and so long as its only men in the militia, there is no reason why women cannot learn how to defend themselves.

The only nations who made all men part of the militia were the growing Calvinistic countries who took this principle directly from the Bible. For example, (even to this day) Switzerland does not require a license to own a gun (to purchase yes, they have started to require a license, but not to own), and a “shall-issue permit” can be gotten for most firearms (even fully automatic weapons) with very little restriction. Most Swiss men are required to learn how to use a gun. In fact, this past week I was reading one anti-gun journalist who complained, “Switzerland has a stunningly high rate of gun ownership.” Yes, that’s true. Yet they haven’t had a mass shooting in 21 years and they have one of the lowest rates of murder in the entire world. So much for statisticians who think that gun confiscation will solve high crime. God says it will do the exact opposite; it will make criminals more bold. For example, in Judges 5 God says that because the people were disarmed by the Philistines, bandits and thieves flourished and the roads were not safe to travel. Weapon control *always* makes crime prosper because weapon control only disarms the honest citizens - not the criminals.

The only kings who disarmed citizens in the Bible were tyrants. They wanted a standing army that got paid and that therefore could be controlled. In contrast, the kings and the judges who were said to bring Israel liberty always (without exception) had an armed citizenry composed of many militias.

Let me give you more quotes. At the first Congress under the Constitution, Representative Eldridge Gerry said, “What, sir, is the use of a militia? It is to prevent the establishment of a standing army, the bane of liberty.” That’s what the constitution meant. George Mason a framer of the 2nd Amendment, said, “To disarm the people is the best and most effectual way to enslave them...” We have become a nation of slaves that wants a police state to protect us rather than taking the risks of protecting ourselves. James Madison said, “[The Constitution preserves] the advantage of being armed which Americans possess over the

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<sup>7</sup> Elliot, Debates, p. 386

<sup>8</sup> Additional letters from the Federal Farmer, at 169, 1788.

people of almost every other nation...[where] the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms." Thomas Jefferson said, "No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms." And this is not just American conservatism; this is what the Bible calls for.

How many of you men are armed and know how to use your arms? In Luke 22 Christ commanded his disciples to carry a sword, and if they didn't have one, He commanded them to sell their shirt and get one. That was how much of a priority it was to own one. And by the way, that was during a time when Rome had outlawed the possession of weapons by private citizens.<sup>9</sup> By commanding them to have arms anyway, Christ was indicating that this was a fundamental right that trumped all statutes. And in this Jesus was standing on the Old Testament law, which David and Jonathan also followed when they owned illegal swords during a time when the Philistines had attempted to confiscate all weapons. Anyway, read it. It's Luke 22:36. This point comes straight out of the Bible. We need an informed citizenry to push back against gun control. We need to communicate our opinions to our representatives. The anti-gun advocates certainly do.

### E. Ability to quickly mobilize (v. 11).

But let's hurry on. Verse 11 reminds us of the requirement in the book of Numbers that though there was no standing army, an army needed to be able to be mobilized very quickly. How quickly was Joshua able to mobilize this army? Verse 11 says, "within three days..." That was only possible because of the previous principles:

1. Officers down to the county level were already existing, so a chain of command was instantly in place.
2. Second, that meant that when Joshua gave the command, it would go down to the local level very quickly and the regional officers were able to mobilize the militias.
3. And third, every man was already part of the militia, had weapons, knew how to use them, and could be ready at a moment's notice to mobilize. Three days gave time to deal with household issues, pack, and say goodbye.

We have stories from the first War for Independence *before* an adequate chain of command was in place that show how long it took to mobilize. The militias mobilized way quicker than Washington's army ever could. One story is that Washington had to mobilize his army to a given area, but long before his army even arrived the local militias had already

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<sup>9</sup> The following books show that Rome (in reaction to Sicarii attacks) made private sword ownership illegal: Martin Goodman and Jane Sherwood, *The Roman World, 44 BC-AD 180* (London: Routledge, 1997); Thomas Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality*, trans. by John Drinkwater (London: Routledge, 2004); Christopher J. Fuhrmann, *Policing the Roman Empire: Soldiers, Administration, and Public Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 184; E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 241.

captured the enemy. With a militia structure, action is immediate, and since they are defending their own homes and farms they are very motivated. You are going to be much more motivated to fight to the death to save loved ones than you are to fight to death for a tyrant.

#### F. Preparation precedes battle.(v. 11)

Another principle is that preparation precedes battle. Verse 11 says, **“Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days...”** etc. That may seem inefficient. Why not have the federal government buy all the provisions needed for their soldiers? But God doesn’t want efficiency. He wants a decentralized but very motivated military. You may remember David bringing food provisions for his brothers who were in the field fighting in Saul’s army. This kept loyalties to their families, not to the federal government. Your loyalty shifts when someone else feeds and pays you. I think you can see why these kinds of things have been evaporated as our government became more statist. Now, Navy was different, and by implication Air-force would be different. But these principles relate to the army.

#### G. Providing for family should not exclude taking dominion of culture. Both are necessary for the long term safety of future generations. (v. 15)

The seventh principle is seen in verse 15.

“Until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He has given you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD’s servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise.”

We’ve already dealt with the disbanding of the army, but here is another principle. Providing for your families does not exempt you from the responsibility to take dominion of culture. Both are necessary for long term safety of future generations. It is always difficult for people to have balance in their lives. They hear about the importance of influencing culture and they spend so much of their time doing so that they neglect and lose their families. Or people see the problems with that and they go to the opposite extreme and say that their family is the most important thing to them and that they don’t have time for any cultural impact because they are focusing on family. But what happens? The families never have modeled to them what it means to have servant-hearts toward outsiders. They never have modeled what it means to courageously defend principle and even be willing to die. The children growing up in such households often become self-absorbed and without any impact on culture. And sometimes such families lose touch with what it means to have dominion at all. It doesn’t matter which extreme you take, you could lose your family to dominion.

I think this is why it is so imperative to have division of labor between husband and wife; and why it is so important for older children to learn responsibilities of raising younger children and domestic duties. It frees the men to have greater impact. And it frees the men

to be role models in the family of self-sacrificing manhood. Don't go to either extreme. There are books out there advocating that men need to be home as much as the women in training their children. That is not biblical. Keep in mind that this is a command by God. The women stayed home, the men went out. Ministry to family *and* ministry to culture are both important. If we don't involve ourselves in the culture wars, our children will be the casualties.

And by the way (just to give balance), Numbers 32 occurred *before* this chapter. In Numbers 32 God gave the men all the time that they needed to provide houses for their wives and children, pens for the animals, fortresses to protect against attack, food and other provisions. God made sure that the emotional needs, the security needs and all other provisions were given to the families *before* they left. They weren't leaving their wives and children in the lurch. But they *did* leave. Don't feel guilty if you don't spend as much time with the children as Mom does.

#### H. For an army to be sustained there must be trust (v. 16), but this should not be a blind trust, but a trust that flows out of God's endorsement (v. 17)

The eighth principle is that for an army to be sustained there must be trust (verse 16), but this should not be a blind trust, but a trust that flows out of God's endorsement (verse 17). Let's trace this through.

Verse 16 says, **\*\*\***"And they answered Joshua, saying,"All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go."**\*\*\*** Though Deuteronomy indicated a semi-voluntary draft, once in, the soldiers needed to obey orders - unless those orders would have made them sin. Verse 17 says, **"Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you."** But it was not a blind following of orders with their minds turned off. Commentators point out that they gave a caveat that this obedience was in the Lord. Verse 17 ends with, **"Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses."** The translation "only" is not quite as clear as the Hebrew. The Hebrew is a conditional that modifies the previous statement. If God is with you, yeah, we will give you our undivided obedience. But the clear implication is that if God is not with you (if He disagrees with any given order) then they would *not* obey. All submission must be submission in the Lord. And for people to require our military people to go against their conscience is not right. There are politicians who want to force military doctors to perform abortions and to punish them if they don't. And military people are being forced to violate their consciences in other areas like covid vaccines. As Martin Luther said at his trial, it is not safe for a Christian to act against his conscience. That includes the military men. They have not given up the bill of rights.

At the Nuremberg trials (as hypocritical as facets of those trials were) soldiers didn't get off the hook with pleading that they were just following orders. You cannot follow orders in the military if you are commanded to sin. Better to suffer the consequences with man, than the consequences with God. And the Nuremberg trials recognized that right and responsibility.

### I. Armies have stiffer penalties for disobedience during time of war.

The ninth principle is that armies have stiffer penalties for disobedience during time of war. Verse 18 says, **“Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death.”** Why such a tough penalty? Because the lives of a whole army cannot be jeopardized by the disobedience or betrayal of one person. It is the *situation of war* that makes such insubordination a capital crime. This is not something military officers could do when there was no war. Now it could be argued that these weren't the words of God at this point, but simply the response of the people. But many commentators believe that this was based on Deuteronomy 17:12, which authorizes up to the death penalty for deliberate rebellion against a lawful order. And you might wonder where the contingency of it being a *lawful* order comes from. I have already talked about that, but let me quote from a commentary. Richard Nelson says the contingency is found in the Hebrew word *raq* (or “only”) in Joshua 1:18. He says, this word “inserts a subtle note of contingency into their pledge of obedience.”<sup>10</sup> And if you have the NET study Bible notes, you will notice that it says that “word qualifies what precedes.”<sup>11</sup> So this issue of the death penalty was only related to disobedience to *lawful orders during time of conflict* and not at any other time.

This point could be debated (and probably will be debated), but the logic is that without such a provision the entire army's safety can be jeopardized. God doesn't ask every soldier to second-guess what would be the best tactic to use. If you have an army of men who all want to pretend to be officers and strategists you will have a pretty useless army. Armies must have stiff military discipline for the survival of all.

### J. Armies need men with strength and courage.

The tenth principle is that armies need men with strength and courage. Verse 18 concludes: **“Only be strong and of good courage.”** And of course, that is exactly what God had commanded Joshua in verse 9 and commanded the men in verse 14. It does not do any good to have a universal draft if such a draft dilutes the army with cowards unable to be brave in battle. Gideon discovered that you can do far more with 300 courageous men than with 32,000 undisciplined men. It doesn't take large numbers to win a war. Some historians claim that the first American war for independence was won with 4% of the population. Recently that has been debated, but it was still a minority. In the second war for independence, the South won many, many battles against all kinds of odds because of the ferocious courage that the men had. Nor does it take mighty weapons to win a war. The war that Russia waged against Afghanistan many years ago demonstrates that the Soviet Union

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<sup>10</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary*, First edition, The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Jos 1:18.

with all of its sophisticated helicopters, tanks, and other weapons was no match for a courageous and determined populace even though they only had antiquated weapons.

### **K. Even the military's trust must be in God since God gives the outcomes of battles (vv. 11d, 13b, 15a)**

But I want to end with the observation that even the military must put its trust in God since God alone gives the outcomes of battles - all battles. This is a repeated refrain in the book of Joshua, and it is repeated three times in this passage. When God withdrew His blessing, battles were lost even though the odds *should* have been in their favor. When God blessed, battles were won even when the odds were against them. And there are many passages that say that this principle is true of even pagan nations. Deuteronomy 2:12 says that "the descendants of Esau dispossessed" the Horites *by God's design*. And the major and minor prophets say that God raises up and casts down armies even within pagan nations.

I'll just give you one example. Daniel 8 prophesied that God would enable a future king (Alexander the Great) to achieve remarkable victories against all odds. It says that *God* would enable those remarkable victories. And battle after battle shows God's providential control of those pagans as God used one pagan nation to decimate a far more corrupt pagan nation. Daniel 8 had to be fulfilled and against all odds, it was. In your outlines are two paintings of the battle of Granicus where the Greeks fought against the Persians. From a human perspective, Alexander should have lost. Alexander had only 35,000 foot-soldiers and a handful of cavalry against 100,000 Persian soldiers and another 10,000 Persian cavalry. That's 35,000 against 110,000. Alexander was vastly outnumbered. Furthermore, Alexander was going onto Persian soil after crossing the Hellespont river and then the Granicus River. So they were fighting while already exhausted and coming uphill out of the water at a huge disadvantage. Yet only 100 Greeks were killed and 20,000 Persians were killed. You cannot help but see God's providence fighting against the Persians. It's nothing short of astonishing. Without God's promised aid Alexander would have lost.

And the book of Joshua will be demonstrating that when God is against Israel, there is nothing Israel can do to win, and when God is for Israel, it wins amazing victories.

Applied to today, it is not enough for America to have one of the strongest militaries in the world and some of the best military equipment in the world. Military history shows that superior forces and arms is not enough. By simple odds, yes, America is in a good place to win. But if God becomes increasingly offended with America's arrogant rebellion, our military could lose disastrously. Keep in mind that God holds formerly Christian nations (who should know better) far more accountable than pagan nations who *don't* know any better. And it wouldn't have to be an EMP scenario. God alone gives the outcomes of wars, and it is to Him that we should look. As our money states, "In God we trust." Well, that is a part of history, but not current reality. Apart from national repentance for abortion, perversity, statism, socialism, and a host of other sins, I fear that the Lord will not continue to prosper us. Pray diligently for not just a downsizing of DC but also for a Reformation in DC and every state and county. May it be so Lord Jesus. Amen.