

# Armchair Religion, No heart for the Fight!

by Mike Attwood

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*This sermon delves into Judges chapter 18, focusing on the Danites seeking a new territory, stealing Micah's priest and idols, and slaughtering the people of Laish. It highlights the theme of seeking an easier option rather than fighting for the inheritance God has given, leading to idolatry and disobedience. The sermon emphasizes the importance of being willing to engage in the spiritual battle, not seeking an easy way out, and the consequences of idolatry and seeking guidance from the wrong sources.*

**Scripture:** Judges 18:1, Deuteronomy 8:7, Jeremiah 4:15, John 10:12, Isaiah 45:22

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Consequences of Idolatry"

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## Description

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## Transcript

All right, we'd like to look at Judges chapter 18 this morning. I'm going to read the first 10 verses, although I suspect we may get further than that, but just for reading purposes. And so Judges 18, and beginning in verse 1, it says, In those days there was no king in Israel.

And in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in. For unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valor, from Zorah and from Eshtiol, to spy out the land and to search it.

And they said unto them, Go search the land, who when they came to Mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man, the Levite, and they turned in thither and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? And what makest thou in this place? And what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

And the priest said unto them, Go in peace before the Lord is your way wherein ye go. Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless after the

manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and there was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything. And they were far from the Zidonians and had no business with any man.

And they came unto their brethren, to Zorah and Eshtiol, and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them, for we have seen the land, and behold it is very good. And are ye still? Be not slothful to go and to enter to possess the land. When you go, ye shall come unto a people secure and to a large land, for God hath given it into your hands, a place where there is no one of anything that is in the earth.

And again, God will bless that reading from his precious word to us. I want to just give you kind of the outline for this chapter and then we'll put it in the wider context of the section. But at least the outline that I'm going to use this morning.

In verses 1 through 10, we see the Danites seeking a new territory. And then in verse 11 through 26, we see them stealing Micah's priest, as well as his idols and everything else, stealing Micah's priest. And then 27 through 31, we see him slaughtering, they see the Danites slaughtering the people of Laish.

So, seeking new territory, stealing Micah's priest, slaughtering the people of Laish. By the way of title, I'm just going to call this message, Armchair Religion, and I'll explain the reason why. But I want to suggest to you that part of the problem here is that Dan are doing what they're doing because they have really no heart for the fight.

They want an easy option, and they don't want to fight for the inheritance that God has already given them. We also mentioned, and again, just to get the overall scene, chapters 17 through 21, there's this appendix to the whole book really, and they're really, it's kind of showing the conditions that prevail throughout the period of judges. And in verse 17 and 18, it talks about the spiritual failure, their decline into idolatry.

It began in a man's home, and it ends up being in a whole tribe by the time we get to the end of this chapter. So, the spiritual decline of the nation, the spiritual failure, and then chapters 19 through 21, we'll observe the moral failure of the nation. And the two go hand in hand.

If we have a wrong concept of God, then we'll have a wrong view of morality. And certainly we see that, their spiritual failure led to great moral failure. When we look at 17 and 18 together, last time we observed, first of all, in verses 1 through 6 of chapter 17, we observed this do-it-yourself religion that Micah made for himself a graven image and a molten image.

And so, contrary to what God had revealed in Scripture, contrary to Exodus 20, it was a do-it-yourself religion, and he even appointed his son to be a priest. But then in verse 7 through 13 of chapter 17, we saw commercial religion, where there was basically a priest for hire, and this Levite was very happy, even though it involved great compromise, he was very happy because he was getting basically 10 shekels and a shirt, and that was wonderful as far as he was concerned. And so, he, again, is an example of commercial religion.

And then this chapter, we're going to look at armchair religion. We're going to meet the Levite again in this chapter. This Levite, none other will explain later than the grandson of Moses, and yet he is so far from what his grandfather was, and we're going to just see how quickly things deteriorated.

C. A. Coates would suggest that this Levite is a type of diatrophes. He's not seeking a place for Jehovah, but he's seeking a place for himself. He keeps seeing him, he's seeking a place, he's seeking a place.

And, of course, a diatrophes is somebody that wants the preeminent place that has already been given to someone else, the Lord Jesus, that in all things, he might have the preeminence. So, here's a man seeking a place. So, verse 1 through 10, seeking new territory.

Verse 1 and 2, they're searching out the land. And, of course, it begins with this often repeated refrain in this section, in those days there was no king in Israel. And, again, we've said it's not an allusion to the fact that this was prior to the monarchy and a more strong centralized leadership.

That's not what's in view here. When it says there's no king in Israel, it's saying that the Lord, who should have been king, when they demanded a king, the Lord said to Samuel, they're not rejecting you, they are rejecting me, that I should be king over them. And so, basically, in those days, there's no king in Israel, they're not acknowledging the kingship rights of God in their lives.

And the result is they're doing that which is right in their own eyes. And so, we've got another example of that here in this chapter. It says, and in those days, the tribe sought them an inheritance to dwell in.

And so, they're looking for an inheritance. The problem is God had already given them an inheritance, and they failed to enter into it. Certainly, Dan proved himself to be the weakest of the tribes of Israel.

We see back in chapter 1 of the book of Judges that they had been forced up into the mountains, first of all, by the Amorites. In chapter 1 and verse 34, it says, the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain, for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley. And so, lacking faith and courage to take possession of the inheritance God had given them, received by direction from God, they basically sent men to find an easier place for them.

And they found that place, as we'll see in this chapter, in the very northern tip of the land, in a place called Laish. And it was basically their unwillingness to fight for that which God had given them that is really the background to this whole chapter. But we've already sensed their unwillingness to fight earlier on in Judges.

In chapter 5, in Deborah's song, she tells us in verse 17, Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the seashore and abode in his breeches. And so, as they're talking about who came to the battle in the time of need, the Danites abode in ships. In other words, they did not volunteer for the fight.

They just are a people that don't have much backbone. They don't have much heart for the fight. They desired a life of ease, and that life of ease led to idolatry and complete disobedience to God.

And of course, it's important to ask ourselves, as we look at this chapter, are we up for the fight? We're supposed to be fighting the good fight of faith. We're in a battle. We're in a warfare.

We're in a spiritual battle. Are we up for the fight? Are we engaged in the spiritual battle? Are we serving the Lord with vigor? Because if we're not, it's very easy to drift in a direction that would lead to complete departure and apostasy. And we certainly see that amongst the tribe of Dan.

No heart for a fight. That really is the root of all of these difficulties, this desire in a life of ease. So, are we up for the fight? Failure to deal with the old life of Canaan, the Amorites, chapter 1, verse 34, ultimately robbed them of enjoying the full inheritance that God had for them.

And again, our failure to deal with the old life robs us of enjoying the full inheritance, the Lord wants us to have in the Lord Jesus, entering in to the great inheritance we have in the heavenly places. Sometimes it's our failure to deal with the old life. They represented those who have been professedly and nominally on heavenly ground, but they're not satisfied there.

And they're not willing to, because it's too hard, because in the heavenly places, there's warfare, there's a spiritual warfare, and it puts too much demand on them, and they want an easier option. No doubt they would explain this by the Amorites and later the Philistines as their reason for being forced to live in a confined area in the hill country. But the Lord had promised, you see, that if they would go into the land, that he would be with them, that he would fight their battles for them, that he would strengthen them.

If they would just simply trust him, if they would just have faith and courage, they could enter into the fullness that God intended for them. But they failed. You might say that God is looking for heroes today.

In chapters 3 through 16, when God raised up these judges, we had examples of heroes, men who were willing to fight for that which was given to them by God, men who were willing to enter into the battle. But we see in chapters 17 through 21, there are no heroes, none whatsoever. Isn't it easy sometimes for all of us to leave a hard place where God has put us and run away to an easier place? It kind of robs us a lot really of the humbling needed to seek God's help and guidance in the difficulties.

And I think in our culture generally, there's this mentality of if you're going through a difficult patch, the best thing to do is bail out. You know, just get out of there. You're going through a difficult marriage, abandon ship.

Going through difficult is in the assembly, just leave. That's the mentality, right? Let's find an easier place. And that's what's going on here.

God had given them an inheritance. It was a marvelous inheritance, but it was a hard place because you've got these Amorites, you've got these Philistines, you've got opposition, you've got difficulty. And so the easiest option for them was to look somewhere else for an easier place.

They were discontented with the place God had given them. And they ended up leaving there and making a thorough nuisance of themselves. So often the Lord's people can make a nuisance of themselves if they're running away from problems.

The problem is they take the real source of the problem with them and they cause trouble wherever they go. So verse two, it says, the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coast, men of valor from Zorah, from Eshtiol to spy out the land and to search it. And they said to them, go search the land who, when they came to Mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

So this discontentment with their inheritance causes them to send five men to travel northwards. And ultimately, by the time they're done, they will have gone a hundred miles further away from their original inheritance, 161 kilometers. And not surprisingly, the journey led them away from the Lord and to a house of an idolater.

And that's where they end up. The people of God, who are not satisfied with the full enjoyment of their own inheritance, are ready for the enemy to come in and lead them astray. An unfilled heart, a heart that's failed to enter upon its own portion, which is given to us through the Lord, is open to great assaults from the enemy.

So they go on a survey of the land, but the last survey of the land where their inheritance was given to them was in Joshua 18 and verses two through 10. And this was the God appointed, if you like, survey of the land to distribute to the tribes what would be their inheritance. But now they're doing again, that which has already been done before, because they're not satisfied with their portion.

And so they're out surveying the land. And so verse three through six, not only are they busy searching out the lands, they are now seeking guidance. And so it says in verse three, when they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man, the Levite, and they turned in thither and said unto him, who brought thee hither? What makest thou in this place? And what has thou here? So these five men, representatives of a dissatisfied people came under the influence of a priest who had himself been discontented with this place and left and gone seeking his fortunes elsewhere.

Notice the battery of questions that they ask, showing their surprise to find a Levite in this place. Remember a Levite in a house filled with idols. That's a surprising thing to find this.

And so they asked some questions, who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? And what do you have here? Because Micah had a bunch of idols and a priest, this priest, a Levite was in charge of it all. And these are very good questions, aren't they? That we might ask ourselves a good spiritual checklist. Who brought you here? Do you sense that you're in the place where the Lord has brought you? What are you doing in this place? If we're in a place we shouldn't be, it's right that people would ask us, what are you doing in this place? And many a child of God has been found in a place he ought not to have been.

And somebody has asked him, what are you doing here? You don't belong here. What are you doing in this place? And then what do you have here? What do you got in your hands? What are you dealing with? What are your hands like? And of course, Micah had a bunch of idols that he was dealing with. And the priest, this Levite, was giving his assent to it all.

And so they're asking these questions. And verse 4, you notice that he doesn't even seem slightly embarrassed. He's so hardened, you might say his conscience is so seared, that he said to them, thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

And so again, showing the poor spiritual condition of things. I'm here in this house full of idols, because Micah has been really nice to me, and he's hired me, and I am his priest. And not one sense of conviction at all about being in the wrong place, doing the wrong thing.

It just seems to be content in this situation. Verse 5, it says, they said to him, ask counsel we pray thee of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. We're not just sure how spiritually confused this time was.

The Danites are on a sinful mission, meet with a sinful Levite, and want to know from a righteous God if their mission will be successful. Can you see the irony of the whole thing? And the sinful Levite sent the sinning men on their way with God's blessing. This is how bad things are in the book of Judges.

In fact, the Danites should have consulted the Lord through the tabernacle and the high priest at Shiloh. If you look at the end of the chapter, verse 31, they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh. And remember, where they are right now, in Mount Ephraim, is very close to the location of Shiloh, where the tabernacle is present, and that God is present in the tabernacle.

The ark of God is there, the high priest is there, and what do they do? Instead of going to seek counsel in the place that God had chosen to place his name, they go to this man who's out of the will of God in a house full of idols, and they seek advice there. Because what they were wanting was somebody just to give them the go-ahead to pursue their wrong cause. And sometimes we can seek guidance in the wrong place because we don't want our answer or our search to be questioned.

We want somebody to tell us what we want to hear. And so we ask the people that are going to confirm our rebellious decision. And so they say, ask counsel of God.

It's interesting, isn't it, how they are asking counsel of God. They don't mention Jehovah, it's Elohim. Again, would this be an indication of their poor spiritual condition? Not a covenant name for God, but just ask God first.

And so we see this low spiritual condition, and verse 6 says, the priest said to them, go in peace before the Lord is your way wherein ye go. And so very little indication here that this Levite spends a lot of time praying and seeking the Lord's mind. He made no attempt, it would seem, to seek God's guidance at all.

He just told them exactly what they wanted to hear. And of course, in doing so, he took the covenant name for God on his lips. The priest said to them, go in peace before the Lord is your way wherein ye go.

It tells us that in the last days, Steve Budd in our Q&A session last week reminded us of the parallels with 2 Timothy. And we have a parallel in 2 Timothy 4 and verse 3 to what is going on here. Let me just take a moment to read it.

But it really does parallel what we find here, is that they were looking for somebody to tell them what they wanted to hear. And it says in verse 3 of 2 Timothy 4, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own loss shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. And we see this here.

They just wanted somebody to tell them what they wanted to hear. And Jonathan, this high priest or this priest of Micah was so happy to comply and tell them exactly what they wanted to hear. And of course, we're reminded too that these men who were tickling itching ears, part of the reason was they had itchy palms as well.

They were looking for money to basically fund them in their service. And so it seems that everything went according to plan. That's the amazing thing.

He said, go, the Lord's with you basically. And they go and they find exactly what they're looking for. It's an easy place.

It seems like everything works perfectly. And yet we're reminded in the book of Deuteronomy, that we still have to cleave to the word of God, even when it seems that everything is going smoothly for those who are practicing error. So if you look at it just for a second with me, Deuteronomy 13 is very pertinent to what

we're just looking at in this section.

It says, if there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them. Thou shalt not hearken to the words of the prophet or the dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God proveth you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul.

You shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and you shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And the prophet or the dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way, which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

And so he tells us that there's the possibility of prophets dreaming dreams, giving signs and wonders, and they come to pass. They actually are fulfilled. But then they ask you to depart from what God has revealed in his word.

He said, Don't even listen to these guys. In fact, put them to death. And so here's this priest, and what he tells them all comes to pass.

But is this priest following the word of God? No, he's overseeing a house of graven images, which is a direct contradiction to the commandments of the very first commandments of God. And so we can say that sometimes success is no guarantee that this is the work of God. You see, in our day, groups like the Jehovah's False Witnesses, if we're looking at numbers, they seem to have a success, but they deny the very deity of the Lord Jesus.

You see what I'm saying? So sometimes success is no guarantee that this is the truth. And so although they have success on their mission, the very mouth that pronounces blessing upon them is involved in things that he ought not to be involved in, clearly flagrantly disobeying the word of God. And these men should have known better.

They should have known the book of Deuteronomy. They should have known not to base anything on the supposed success of anything, but on faithfulness to the word of God. So in verses seven through 10, having sought guidance and got the guidance they wanted, they now share their findings with their brethren.

And so it says, then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure. And there was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything. And they were far from the Zidonians, had no business with any man.

I want to just kind of talk a little bit about this verse, because I see in this verse the great makings of a gospel message, because it's a very fascinating thing. These people are a careless people. Now it's interesting that they're living carelessly, and yet judgment is going to fall upon them very quickly.

It's not going to be long before they're going to be slaughtered, and everything they have is going to be burned to the ground. And it reminds me of the world we find ourselves in. There's a careless generation.

Judgment, as it were, the storm clouds are gathering. God's judgment is coming on the earth, and yet there are people that are careless. It says, Thou saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless.

Isn't that so much like our generation, a careless people? And not only are they a careless people, they're a lawless people. It says, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and there was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything. In other words, they're just a bit like the nation of Israel right now.

Everybody's doing that which is right in their own eyes. There's no magistrate. There's no legal system that is going to punish them for what they're doing, even though it's evil.

And we know that the people of the land, the reason God was going to evict them from the land was because of their sin. And so here's the people that are a lawless people. Not only is there no justice being seen, no magistrate, but there's no shame.

Well, does that describe North America at this time in history? People are living lives that are completely contrary to the word of God, and there's no shame anymore. Nobody's ashamed of anything. In fact, they're proud of their moral defilement, and they march in the streets with such arrogance, a lawless people, and yet they're a helpless people.

I want you just to look for a minute down to verse 27 and 28 of this chapter. It says, and they took the things which Micah had made, and the priests which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were quiet and secure, and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire, and there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zida. They had no business with any man, and it was in the valley that lieth by Beth Rehob, and they built a city and dwelt therein.

I just want you to notice that there was no one to help them. They were helpless, and there was no deliverer, and of course, in our culture, the wonderful truth is that there is a deliverer. There is a deliverer for this generation.

There is a deliverer for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, they shall be saved, and so there's a slight difference in the story, but for them, there was no deliverer. There was no hope for them. They were a helpless people, and it's true that outside of the Lord, we're all helpless people.

We can't save ourselves. There's nothing we can do. We need a deliverer, but God, in his grace, has sent a deliverer.

I was reading this morning Isaiah 45, 22. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there's none else. Oh, what a wonderful message it is that we have to proclaim to a generation that are on the cusp of judgment, but there is one that bore their judgment, so forgive me for getting sidetracked there, but I just thought I couldn't help but see a full-blown gospel message right there in that passage, and sure, it's brewing, and it will be let loose soon, but it's always good to see the gospel.

I remember one evangelist, and he used to take young men with him, and he'd give them a passage of scripture, and he said, now find a gospel message in that passage, and we need to be seeing the gospel in every place and using it so that we can share it with others. Certainly, these people in Laish were meant to be driven out. That was God's plan for that because, again, of their great sin.

If you look again at the book of Joshua chapter 13, these were a people that were under the judgment of God, but it wasn't the tribe of Dan's job. It was another tribe that was responsible for that part of the land, and yet they themselves were still under the judgment of God. In Judges 13 verse 14, and that's Joshua.

No, wrong reference there. Oh yeah, verse 13 perhaps says, nevertheless, the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites nor the Makathites. The Geshurites, the Makathites dwell among the Israelites to this day.

Let me just see if it's verse 24. Anyway, basically, they were part of this listing in chapter 13 that was supposed to be driven out of the land and executed because of their sin and their rebellion. So, as the spies look at this, their observation is that it's an easy take.

They could possess this territory. It stood in marked contrast to the difficulties they faced in the south. They had nobody to come to help them.

They were in a very vulnerable position in Laish. Part of it was they were Sidonians, and they were cut off from the Phoenician city of Sidon by Mount Lebanon on one side, and they were isolated by Mount Hermon on the other side. So, there's nobody can come and rescue them.

They're in a place that is very vulnerable. And so, that is why they look at it, and they say, this is an easy take. We can take this land.

And so, they came to their brethren, to Zorah and Eshter. And their brethren said to them, What say ye? Verse 9, they said, Arise, that we may go up against them. But we have seen the land, and behold, it's very good.

And are ye still? Be not slowful to go and to enter to possess the land. When you go, you shall come to a people secure to a large land, for God hath given it into your hands, a place where there's no want of anything that is on the earth. Now, what I want us to do just for a moment is I want us to look back to Deuteronomy again, and see how much of what they're saying parallels what had been said about the entire land, especially that the goodness of the land and all the rest of it.

It's almost like they're parroting Deuteronomy 8 and verses 7 and 8. Deuteronomy 8 and verses 7 and 8, where we read this, it says, For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks, of water, fountains and depths and springs out of the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, and so on and so forth. So, they were promised a good land. And they see this and their report really echoes that.

They came to their brethren. They said, Arise, that we may go up against them, for we have seen the land, and behold, it's very good. And are you still be not slothful to go and enter to possess the land? It's a pity that they didn't give that challenge when they were in the south, when they were in the land God had allotted to them.

Why are you slothful? Let's get up and take the land. It's kind of a mentality. I think it's in all of us, but it always seems to be easier somewhere else.

You know, if I was on the mission field, it would be so much easier to be a witness than it is where I am. If I was, you know, in this place, where it seems like God is blessing me, so much easier. Instead of recognizing the place that God has placed me, and not being slothful, but seeking to enter to possess the

land where I am.

And so, they say, be not slothful, let's go in and enter it. It says, it's a large land, God has given it into your hands. Well, that's exactly what was said about their own inheritance.

God had given the whole land into their hands, but they didn't have the faith and courage to do it. Some have suggested that this was a conquest worthy of a lot, but not of an Abraham. It might have been a well-watered plain, but it's not what God had promised them.

They preferred a conquest without danger. They spoke enthusiastically about this land, but they weren't enthusiastic about the true inheritance that God had given them. And it became a very dangerous place to them.

Because even though it was easy to take, it became basically the, the, the, on the main invasion route of the land of Israel. Remember, all the invasions of Israel seemed to come down from the north. And this was on that very route.

In fact, if we, if we look at Jeremiah chapter four, Jeremiah the prophet and chapter four, we will see that this area was on that main invasion route. And it was a very dangerous place, even though it was easy to get in the first place, but they put themselves in a place of great danger and great danger of judgment. So Jeremiah four verses 15 and 16, it says for a voice declares from Dan and publishes affliction from Mount Ephraim, making mentioned to the nations, behold, publish against Jerusalem that watches come from a far country and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

And so where did they come? Where did they declare it from, from Dan? They came from the north. This was the main invasion route where both the Assyrians Babylonians would come into the land. And so they put themselves in that place of great danger by not being contented with God's inheritance and going away from the place that he had set for them.

Notice verse 11. Now it says there went from of the family of the Danites out of Zorah and out of Eshtiol, 600 men appointed with weapons of war. So they appoint an army of 600 men to fight for the city of Laish in the land of the tribe of Ephraim.

It should have been Ephraim's land. They couldn't fight for the land of their own tribal allotment. And again, as we've said to them, and often to us a distant battle seemed easier than a close battle.

Interesting that not everybody went. It's only a small portion of the tribe of Dan. Remember that when they numbered the tribes in the second numbering in Deuteronomy, I'm sorry, Numbers 26, it tells us that there were 64,400 of the tribe of Dan able to go to war.

That's a large number. And yet only 600 went. So a lot of people stayed.

In fact, Samson, as we've already learned about, he and his family stayed in their allotted area, even though they didn't fully inherit it, they stayed. But this small group migrate up to the north, these dissatisfied ones, and they basically divide the tribe of Dan into two groups, the one in the north and the one in the south. So they were prepared to fight where they perceived it to be easy battles.

But they had no desire to engage in the fight of faith against their enemies, which called for total dependence on the Lord. So this group only represented a proportion of the tribe. And again, he said

these 600 armed men, and they're ready for battle.

But why did they not go into battle where God had placed them? Why were they willing to go to this other place? Notice verse 12, it says they went up and pitched in Kirjath-Jerim in Judah, wherefore they called that place Mahan-Dan. And unto this day, behold, it is behind Kirjath-Jerim. And this place is really the camp of Dan.

We've already seen it once. It's called the camp of Dan in Judges 13 verse 25, where the spirit of the Lord began to move on Samson many years later. It says the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtiol.

This is where they gather together in this camp of Dan and ready to go to take this inheritance. And it says in verse 12, they went up and pitched in Kirjath-Jerim. Verse 13, they passed thence unto Mount Ephraim, and they came to the house of Micah.

It says they then answered the five men that went, verse 14, to spy out the country of Laish and said unto their brethren, do you know that there is in these houses an ephod and a teraphim and a graven image and a molten image? Now therefore consider what thou have to do. Notice it says in these houses, plural, suggesting that a small village may have built up around Micah's house to share the worship instituted by him of these graven images. So again, this idolatry is growing now.

There are houses, not just the house of Micah, there are houses. And the 600 men were put on watch while the five men plundered Micah's shrine. It's interesting how even though they thought they'd got a great deal of help from this house in the past, remember when they sought guidance from God and they were given it, so they decided for themselves, why not take the shrine with them and the priest, seeing as it had done them so good in the past, let's just take it with us.

And that's their plan. And so it says in verse 15, they turned to the wood and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, even to the house of Micah and saluted him. And the 600 men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

So of course, an ominous sight, hardly this priest and Micah are hardly going to make a stand when there are 600 men armed to the teeth in the driveway, just watching the events take place here. And so notice it tells us in verse 17, it says, and the five men that went to spy out the land went up and came up and took the graven image and the ephod and the teraphim and the molten image and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the 600 men that were appointed with weapons of war. And these went into Micah's house and fetched the carved image, the ephod and the teraphim and the molten image, then said the priest unto them, what do ye? But in spite of the previous friendly reception and help that had been given to them here, they showed no respect or loyalty towards Micah or his priest.

They brought out the spoils and then the priest asked them, what do you think you're doing? What are you doing here? And his inquiry, no doubt, was prompted by his anxiety at the sight of his position and his livelihood disappearing before his eyes. He's not really, he didn't really care about Micah. What he's concerned about is, am I going to lose my place? The thing that he'd been looking for, lose my income, lose my prestige, am I going to lose all of this? And so verse 19, they said to him, hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth and go with us and be to us a father and a priest.

Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man or that I'll be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? Verse 20, notice his response, and the priest's heart was glad and he took the ephod, the teraphim and the graven image and went in the midst of the people. And so basically, he was easily pacified because he got a more influential and a more lucrative position. As to the will of God in the matter, that never entered his mind for a second.

You see, we could write over this man's testimony, he was sold to the highest bidder. He's what the Lord Jesus would refer to later in John's gospel as a highling. He didn't care about the people that he's supposed to minister to.

He just cares about the person who's going to pay the best price for his services. He was silenced by being hired, no loyalty to be found in the highling. He completely disregards the word of God.

He disregards his kind benefactor. He didn't care about Micah, only the pay and the status that he might get by being a priest for a whole tribe, instead of a mere family. He kept everything that had been provided by Micah and now had a more prestigious position as well.

You know, scripture says what a man's souls actually also reap. And we see this with Micah here. You remember how the story began? Micah's idolatry had begun with him stealing 1100 pieces of silver from his mother.

And now he reaps what he's sown because all his gods and his priests are now stolen from him. He gets what to reap, that which he had sowed. And so verse 21 says, so they turned and departed and put the little ones in a cattle and the carriage before them.

And so what they do is that they put all the valuables, little ones, and the things they've stolen in the front. And then they have the 600 men guarding the rear. So the Danites clearly knew what they'd done was wrong, then they expected repercussions.

And so they put the valuables at the front trying to protect them, and they put these men at the rear to intimidate and protect any possibility of somebody coming to take from them that which is they have stolen. And so we notice in verse 22, and when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together and overtook the children of Dan, again, because they've got children with them. Remember, this is not just 600 warriors, but they've got children with them and their wives and all.

So it slows them down. So Micah and his neighbors are able to overtake them very quickly. It's sad, though, that Micah doesn't learn from all this.

If he'd been truly exercised about the matter, he would have perceived that the Lord's hand was in the events. He would have realized the Danites had done him a favor in removing the things that were displeasing to the Lord. See, all this idolatry was not pleasing to God.

However, his thoughts were dominated by what he thought he had lost, rather than any good that could have come out of this seeming disaster in his mind. And so he goes to try and seek to get back that which he thought he had lost that was valuable to him, recruiting the neighbors to try and retrieve his gods, which were evidently incapable of looking after themselves. A lot of irony here, isn't it? I mean, these gods are carried away.

They're not in a position to defend themselves. Whereas later on, as we've already studied, we've done this in the wrong order. When we studied the Ark of the Covenant being taken from the tabernacle, we noticed that the Lord did not need anybody to defend himself.

He completely wreaked havoc on Dagon, the god of the Philistines, and also on the Philistines themselves. And they, in the end, were quick to send back the God of Israel, because he is well able to take care of himself. Whereas these idols are absolutely incapable of looking after themselves or those that bow down to them.

Look at verse 23. It says, they cried to the children of Dan, and they turned their faces and said to Micah, what aileth thee that thou comest with such a company? And so the Danites feigned surprise at the presence of Micah and said, what's your problem? Micah's reply betrayed a man who was steeped in idolatry, and had lost sight and confidence fully in the Lord. He says, you have taken away my gods, verse 24, which I made.

Isn't that interesting? You've taken away the gods which I have made. What a betrayal of what's going on here. These are gods that he has made.

And you've gone away, and what have I more? And what is that you unto me? What aileth thee? Notice he says, what have I more? In other words, everything this man had, had been taken away from him. Isn't it amazing? Brethren, just to remind ourselves today, that we have a high priest who nobody or nothing can take away from us. He lives at God's right hand in the power of an endless life, and he will never be taken away.

You see, if you have gods and a priest that can be taken away from you, they're clearly not worthy of your worship. This is such an irony, really. He had to rescue his own gods.

See, we either worship a god of our making, or we worship the true God who made us. And idolatry is worshiping a god of our own making, whether it's fabricated in a shop, or whether it's the product of our imagination. I think this is what God would do in a case like this.

Idol worship is just another way of worshiping self. Really, that's what it is. I'm making the God in my image, and of course, and usually, it's even inferior to us.

Micah was foolish enough to have a priest who could have been taken away. How wonderful to have a priest who can never be taken away from us. It shows how empty Micah's idolatry was.

His false gods didn't bring him any lasting good. He says, now what more do I have? I've lost everything. What more do I have? And basically, he has nothing.

Well, that's probably a good place for us to end our thoughts this morning. But just as a reminder to all of us, let's not run away from difficult places in difficult situations. Let's trust the Lord and depend on him to give us victory where he's placed us.

And only be led, not because we're looking for an easier option, but because we sense the Lord is the one who is leading us. And we can see, as we're going to conclude this section next time, that it really led to disaster for the tribe of Dan in a very great, serious way. May God encourage us and challenge us with these thoughts this morning.

Amen.

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