

"You're Not Doing Us Any Good Over There"

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The preacher had labored long and hard to become a capable proclaimer of God's holy word. He and his family continued to sacrifice much in order that their labors could be fruitful in the Lord's kingdom. The opportunity now arose for him to preach the gospel in an area where the Lord's church did not exist. What an opportunity! He joyously approaches the elders of the congregation with the wonderful prospect of evangelism. The elder's reply? "If you go over there, you will not be paid for that time. After all, you're not doing us any good over there."

The above is not merely a fantasy; it is a true story. The preacher did go on the three-week trip, but lost his salary, except for one week's vacation time, for the time he was gone. Even sadder is the fact that similar incidents occur with increasing regularity. And because of it many, unlike the above man, do not go and souls are deprived of the saving gospel. How sad that many preachers are discouraged in the work they do by the very ones who should be most supportive.

Such should not really surprise us. This is not the first time this has happened. In Numbers 32 the children of God had already fought the battle east of the Jordan. The children of Reuben and Gad approached Moses and said "let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan" (verse 5). Moses obviously felt their request amounted to saying, "We already have what we want and need, there is nothing in it for us . . . we'll stay here while the rest of you go on." As a result Moses brought forth a scathing rebuke. He asked the question, "shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?" (verse 6). He then stated the sad result of such an action, "wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?" (verse 7). He showed plainly how such an action was like the sinful actions of forty years previous which led to the wilderness wanderings (verse 8-13). Then came the crowning statement: "behold, ye are risen up in your father's stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord" (verse 14). It is easy to see the parallel between this ancient event and its modern day counterpart. There are still those who rise up in their father's stead to discourage the hearts of the brethren, "an increase of sinful men." It is as if you could hear the children of Reuben and Gad saying today, "We'll not support you over there . . . after all, you're not doing us any good over there." The text of Numbers 32 reveals that thankfully, such was not the intent of the children of God in that day. They were in fact willing to press forward in support of their brethren (verses 16-19, 25-27). Tragically though today, many do mean it. They don't want to get involved, after all, they won't gain anything from it. Jesus taught us plainly that the source of such actions is the heart (Luke 6:45). What attitudes of heart then do such actions reveal?

FAILING TO SUPPORT EVANGELISM INDICATES A SELFISH AND SELF-CENTERED HEART

Moses asked, "shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? . . . wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children . . .?". How could any be so self centered as to think only of themselves? Yet that is exactly what we do when we think in terms of what good there is for "us" in mission endeavors. Maybe some of us need to reread Jesus' description of the judgement scene in which mankind is judged for their actions

in response to others (Matthew 25:31-46).

FAILING TO SUPPORT EVANGELISM INDICATES A HEART OF REBELLION TO THE FATHER

Moses recounted the tragic events in which the children of God refused to heed God's command to go take the land. This rebellion cost many lives and forty years. Do we really think the command of God to "Go . . . teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19) can be taken lightly? Brethren, this is not the "Great Suggestion" but the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior! Whether we go ourselves or send another, the commission must be obeyed if we are to be faithful! To do otherwise is to rebel against God.

Brethren, we need to thank God for those who are willing and able to go to the far reaches of the world to teach the lost. We need to thank God for those fine congregations that support and encourage such efforts. And we need to pray for and teach those who will not. The Lord commanded us to "go." We need to remember the words of Moses as he said, "if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). Let us be encouragers of those who will go forth into battle! Otherwise, our sin will find us out.

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