

THE DANGER of INACTIVITY

“...Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?” Numbers 32:6

King David was an extraordinary soldier and a devout servant of the Lord God. Generally regarded as Israel's greatest king and the author of many of the most loved Psalms and hymns, David had the unique privilege of being described by God as *“a man after (My own) heart.”* (Acts 13:22).

Yet, 2 Samuel 11 records the most disastrous fall into sin by David. It all began with these ominous words: ***“In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war... David remained in Jerusalem”*** 2 Samuel 11:1.

The quickest way to destroy one's spiritual zeal is to respond to Biblical commands with apathy. It is a guaranteed pathway to spiritual disaster:

When God speaks and we do not listen;
 What the Bible teaches, we do not apply;
 What God commands, we do not obey;
 Where God sends, we do not go.

There is a tremendous danger in passivity - Inactivity is deadly to spiritual life (Matthew 25:33-46). ***“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.”*** James 4:17

Of course, on the opposite extreme, battle fatigue/burn out is another serious threat to healthy, balanced discipleship. Nevertheless, those who linger inactively at home, when they should be off to war, are easy targets for temptation. The devil finds evil work for idle hands. Some temptations come to the industrious. All temptations come to the idle. Count your obligations – name them one by one – and it will surprise you what the Lord wants done. When God commissions us to fight then we dare not flinch from our duty. ***“Shall your countrymen go to war while you sit here?”*** Numbers 32:6

The sword is also a symbol of our Faith (Hebrews 4: 12). We are to take ***“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”*** Ephesians 6:17 and ***“Fight the good fight of Faith”*** 1 Timothy 6:12.

“A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work! A curse on him who keeps his sword from bloodshed!” Jeremiah 48:10

The healthiest habit we can cultivate is the practice of obeying God's Word and responding immediately to a call for action. **True love shows itself in action** (1 John 3:18). It is spiritually refreshing to step out in faith and obey God. The first time I heard the Gospel, I went forward and committed my life to Christ. The first time I heard a request for volunteers, I volunteered. When Scripture Union needed workers for a holiday mission; when the Sunday School needed another teacher; when posters needed to be put up to advertise evangelistic rallies; when counsellors were needed; and when I heard the first challenge to get involved in missions, I volunteered. And looking back, I'm so glad I got involved on each of these occasions.

Responding to these calls with enthusiasm were the best things that I could have done. They were followed by spiritually testing times, sometimes tough times, and always teaching times. They were used by the Lord to purge, purify and prepare me to be more prayerful and practical in the adventure

of Christian discipleship. The first time I heard of the persecution of Christians in Mozambique - that there was less than one Bible for every thousand Christians in Mozambique - I started to pray for Mozambique. Soon I was preparing to smuggle Bibles into that war-torn Marxist country. Before long, God had miraculously provided, guided and protected me all the way to the capital city, Maputo and I was able to deliver the first shipment of Bibles Christians had received since the revolution. What a privilege it is to trust and obey our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

Responding to needs in obedience to the clear commands of Scripture - that is what Christianity is meant to inspire. Frontline Fellowship missionaries, overcoming all obstacles, delivered desperately needed Bibles and medicines to war-ravaged Mozambique. Another of our workers, battling with malaria and vehicle breakdowns, walked for days to be the first to present the Gospel to inaccessible villages in the Zambezi valley. Several of our missionaries have swum across crocodile-infested rivers, to carry in, by hand, boxes of Bibles and medicines for Angola. We have driven across Africa and walked across the Nuba Mountains to deliver Bibles, relief aid and to show the *Jesus* film in remote areas, because Christians in Sudan were suffering and were in need of help.

This is the essence of Christian love in practice. Overcoming all obstacles and discouragements, enduring whatever suffering is required, making whatever sacrifices are necessary - persisting until the task is completed.

The best words of advice ever given were spoken by Mary. Referring to Jesus, she said: - ***“Whatever He tells you to do, do it!”*** John 2:5.

The Challenge of the Crusaders

To this day, the Crusades of the middle Ages remain a controversial and even an emotional issue. Strong views have been expressed both for and against the Crusades. Yet there is much we can learn from the faith that inspired those epic undertakings.

The fact is that the Crusades were a reaction to the Islamic invasion of the Holy Lands (those places where our Lord was born, lived, ministered, was crucified and raised from the dead). The Saracens (as the Muslim invaders were called) had desecrated Christian places of worship and were severely persecuting Christians. Pilgrims were being prevented from visiting those sites sacred to their faith.

Bernard of Clairvaux, the author of the classic devotional book ***“On Loving God,”*** urged Christians to join in the Crusades to liberate the Holy Lands from Islamic oppression: *“Our King Jesus is accused of treachery. It is said of Him, by the Saracens that He is not God, but that He is falsely pretending to be something He is not. Any man among you who is His vassal ought to rise up to defend His Lord from the infamous accusation of treachery; he should go to the sure fight, where to win would be glorious and where to die would be gain... I ask you not to put your own business before the business of Christ.”*

Whatever we may believe about the Crusades, we have to admire the incredible devotion and steadfastness which inspired (in the First Crusade alone) over 15,000 Crusaders (10% of whom were knights and 90% foot soldiers) to journey over 3,000 km and sacrifice life and limb to liberate Jerusalem. The first Crusaders were away from home for four years. Later Crusaders were away from home for up to 16 or more years. One widow sold the only thing she owned - her house - to pay for her only son to *“go and free Jerusalem.”*

Now I know that many will raise all kinds of protests and objections, but for myself, having studied the writings, prayers and battles of many of the Crusaders, I am very impressed by the evident sincere devotion of many of the Crusaders. Many were real Christians. Consider the Crusaders Hymn: *Fairest*

Lord Jesus. They deplored their sins. They longed to do something noble and lasting for their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Their prayers, fasting, sacrifices, courage and devotion make our faith look juvenile.

They saw a need and they rose up to meet that need. They committed themselves to liberating the Holy Land and they steadfastly persisted to overcome all obstacles, dangers and discomforts for years, over thousands of miles - by foot or horseback - in inhospitable terrain until they reached their objective. At incredible cost they sacrificed and suffered unbelievable deprivations - hunger, thirst, boiling heat, freezing cold, storms, floods, fire and vicious hand to hand combat - to honour their commitments, to fight for their Lord and to defend the religious liberties of their fellow believers. I personally believe that the average Crusader knew more about Christianity than our average complacent, pew-warming church-goer of today!

In the book of Judges, Deborah asks: *“Why did you stay among the camp fires to hear the whistling for the flocks?”* She notes that *“there was much searching of heart,”* but Gilead *“stayed,”* Dan *“lingered,”* Asher *“remained,”* while *“the people of Zebulun risked their very lives. ...‘Curse Meroz’ said the angel of the Lord. ‘Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the Lord, to help the Lord against the mighty.’”* Judges 5:16-18,23

Now, before anyone accuses me of attempting to launch a new crusade – I am not. However, I believe that we as Christians have the obligation to love our neighbours and this love must be shown in action. When Christian brothers are suffering persecution in Zimbabwe, China, Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan and elsewhere, we must respond in prayer and action. Publicise their plight. Alert other Christians to the crisis. Pray both privately and in public meetings for the persecuted. Mobilise pressure against the persecutors. Be generous in your support of those who are practically helping the persecuted. Encourage others to contribute whatever skills or resources they can towards helping those brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering. And if God calls you to personally go and serve His people in Sudan, North Korea, Cuba, Egypt, Angola, or wherever -then be prepared to respond with the same wholehearted enthusiasm as the Crusaders.

Are You a Good Person?

Often, when one engages in street evangelism, door-to-door, mall evangelism, or other forms of personal evangelism, you come across these kinds of reactions: *“I’m a good person. I don’t smoke, I don’t drink, I don’t do drugs. I don’t steal or swear I’m not a homosexual – I’m a good person!”* Most people are quite convinced that they are good people. Yet, the Bible does not teach the innate goodness of man. “As it is written: there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Romans 3:10-18

Sins of Omission

The Lord Jesus Christ describes the Day of Judgment in Matthew 25, not so much in terms of the bad things we have done, but the good things we failed to do: *“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.”* Matthew 25:41-43

Sin is not only the bad things we do, but the good things we fail to do. *“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”* James 4:17

The Worst Sin

If I were to ask you what the greatest sin is for man to commit, what would you answer? Would you say? Murder? Idolatry? Adultery? Perversion? Hatred? Or blasphemy?

When the Lord Jesus was asked what is the greatest Commandment? He replied: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength...you shall love your neighbour as yourself.”* Mark 12:30-31.

It follows then that the greatest sin would be to fail to love God with all our heart. Failure to love God is the root sin that leads to all others. You cannot love your neighbour unless you first love God. God deserves our wholehearted love – not with some of, or most of, our heart, but with all of our heart. Nothing less than everything we have and the best that we have, is worthy enough for our Sovereign Lord, our Creator, Redeemer and Eternal Judge. *“Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing!”* Rev 5:12

True Love Shows Itself in Action

The Scripture teaches us that our love should not be just words and talk, it must be true love, which shows itself in action (1 John 3:18). Jesus showed us by His great example that **true love is measured by sacrifice**. Some of the most revealing indicators of our love for God are the sacrifices which we make for Him. Love gives and does not count the cost. Love rejoices in giving and wants to give – not out of duty, but out of a glad and willing heart.

Love entails intense enthusiasm, a longing to be near and a desire to serve. Does that describe your love for the Lord?

Do you know your Bible? Are you applying it to every area of life? Do you know what God wants you to do? Are you doing it wholeheartedly?

Faith on Fire

A blacksmith keeps his iron in the fire long enough for the fire to be in the iron. Are you so immersed in God's Word and His presence that His fire burns in your heart? Love is like a fire, it spreads easily, but it constantly needs more fuel to keep it raging. Our love for God feeds by faith in His Word, in worship, in prayer, in praise and adoration. Love is like life - it grows if fed and dies if starved. *“Let me seek You in longing and long for You in seeking, let me find You in love and love You in finding.”*

Duties Required

The Ten Commandments are not only a list of prohibitions. Each of the Ten Commandments include an implicit call to action: To worship God alone. To resist idolatry. To speak respectfully of God and His Word. To work six days and to rest on the Lord's Sabbath. To honour our father and our mother. To respect life. To protect the sanctity of marriage. To respect private ownership of property. To be people of integrity. To maintain a clear conscience before God and man. The Ten Commandments teach us respect for God, respect for His creatures and respect for property.

The Will of God

Praying the Lord's Prayer demands action: *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...”* Matthew 6:10. Jesus taught that: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven.”* Matthew 7:21

“Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” Luke 11:28. *We are commanded to “be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* James 1:22. *The Church today suffers from an abundance of Christians who know volumes more than they practise. We deceive ourselves if*

we believe that true Christianity involves merely going to church and avoiding cigarettes, drunkenness, drugs, swearing and other visible and audible examples of sin. We are saved to serve. At creation the Lord issued The Cultural Mandate to be fruitful, to multiply and to fill the earth, caring for His creation (Genesis 1:28). We are commanded to raise our children in the love and the fear of the Lord, Deuteronomy 6:2-9. According to The Golden Rule of Christ: "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them..." Matthew 7:12

Christian Work Ethic

The Scripture teaches us far more than merely to avoid doing evil. *"Let him who stole, steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."* Ephesians 4:28. As Christians we are commanded to learn to devote ourselves *"to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."* Titus 3:14. The Lord rebukes the idle: *"Why have you been standing here idle all day?"* Matthew 20:6

The Best Sermon Illustration

One of the very best sermon illustrations is the daily testimony of our Christian doing his work and fulfilling his responsibilities with integrity and diligence. The quality of our daily work should witness to our faith in Christ. *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed."* 2 Timothy 2:15

His Commission – Our Ambition

The Lord wants eager volunteers: *"Whom shall I send and who will go for us?"* Isaiah 6:8

The last command of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to be our first concern. His Great Commission must be our supreme ambition – to make disciples, to teach obedience to all things that the Lord has commanded us, (Matthew 28:18-20). As Christians we have to recognise that passivity, neutrality and inactivity are sinful disobedience.

Inactivity is Disobedience

When God speaks and we do not listen.
What the Bible teaches, we do not apply.
What Jesus commands, we do not obey.
Where the Lord sends, we do not go.
We stay seated when we should stand up.
We keep silent when we should speak out.
We stand back when we should step out in faith.
We remain at home when we should be going out into the highways and byways.
Witnessing for Christ, extending and strengthening His Kingdom.

We are Christians. We are people with a message of life and death. Let us wake up to the urgency of a lost world in rebellion to God rushing on its way to an eternity in hell. Lives are at stake. The truth is under attack. God's Name is being blasphemed and He is not being given the honour He deserves.

Joyful, Prayerful and Thankful

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

This is God's will, that we be joyful, prayerful and thankful, that we care for His creation, that we be thoughtful and considerate, that we do to others as we would have them do to us, that we love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbours as ourselves. That we be applying the

Lordship of Christ to all areas of life, making disciples, teaching obedience to all things that the Lord has commanded. True Christianity is seen, not just in what we say, but in what we **do**.

Putting Feet to our Faith

It is spiritually refreshing to step out in faith and obey God. **Let us put feet to our Faith.**

Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it.

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