THE SIN THAT WILL FIND YOU OUT

Numbers 32:23 “But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure your sin will find you out.”

Context

After 40 years in the wilderness for their failure to enter the promised land at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 32:8); and after every male over twenty who had participated in the decision to not enter the Promised Land had died (Numbers 14:29; 26:63-65); and after they had taken firm control of the land on the East Bank of the Jordan; the Reubenites and Gadites came to Moses with a request.

The Request of the Reubenites and Gadites

Numbers 32:1-5 The Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large herds and flocks, saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were suitable for livestock. So they came to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the community, and said…the land the LORD subdued before the people of Israel – are suitable for livestock, and your servants have livestock. If we have found favor in your eyes,” they said, “let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan.”

The Response of Moses

Numbers 32:6&7 Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, “Shall your countrymen go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from going over into the land the LORD has given them?”

Numbers 32:8&9 “This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to look over the land. After they went up to the valley of Eshcol and viewed the land, they discouraged the Israelites from entering the land the LORD had given them.”

Numbers 32:10&11 “The LORD’s anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath: ‘Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of the men twenty years old or more who came up out of Egypt will see the land that I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob –‘”

Numbers 32:12&13 “’not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the LORD wholeheartedly.’ The LORD’s anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone.”

Numbers 32:14&15 “And here you are, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the LORD even more angry with Israel. If you turn away from following him, he will again leave all this people in the desert, and you will be the cause of their destruction.”

The Reubenites and Gadites Respond

Number 32:16&17 Then they came to him and said, “We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children. But we are ready to arm ourselves and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our women and children will live in fortified cities, for protection from the inhabitants of the land.”

Numbers 32:18&19 “We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance. We will not receive any inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan, because our inheritance has come to us on the east side of the Jordan.”

Moses’ Next Reply

Numbers 32:20-22 Then Moses said to them, “If you will do this – if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for battle, and if all of you will go armed over the Jordan before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out before him – then when the land is subdued before the LORD, you may return and be free from your obligation to the LORD and to Israel. And this land will be your possession before the LORD.”

Numbers 32:23 “But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD, and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.”

James 4:17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

The Sin That Will Find You Out

Choosing to not participate in what God has called His people to do, and thereby discouraging others from what God has called His people to do. Choosing to enjoy what has already been achieved, instead of continuing until the job is done.

2 Samuel 11:1-3 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”

Does This Apply to Us?

I Corinthians 10:11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

What Is the Job Given to the Church?

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 24:14 “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

Application

American Christians have a tendency to sit and enjoy the freedom and prosperity we have because of the sacrifices and hard labor of others. This is true in both the political and religious realm.

We watch occasionally the struggles of God’s people elsewhere as they seek to spread the Gospel and the suffering they endure for the cause of Christ. We SIT while they FIGHT.

Our lack of participation discourages those around us in the church, in our community, in our nation and around the world.

And the influence of the Church has dwindled in our nation as the result of so many choosing to not participate in what God has called His people to do, to evangelize and to make disciples.

And now we want God to do something about a situation that is largely a result of our failure to be salt and light to the world around us.

If Moses could say in Numbers 32:15 that the wish of the Reubenites and Gadites to be uninvolved could cause the destruction of God’s people, how do you think God feels about people accepting the incredible gift of forgiveness paid for by the death of His Son, and then refusing to join in the job of spreading the message to those who have not yet heard, and by their actions discouraging others from doing so?

Making It Personal

Are you, am I, committed to being a part of what God has called His people to do? Are we in some way involved in the job of spreading the Gospel and/or making disciples?

Or are we comfortably enjoying what we as Americans have because others fought and died for it, and what we have as a church because others sacrificed and worked hard for us to get where we are without personally being involved in the job God has given the church: witnessing and making disciples.

Are you spiritually wandering in the desert, wondering why all the things that the “land flowing with mild and honey” is supposed to represent, the abundant life Jesus promised, are not real in your life, not realizing that faith and obedience are the keys to receiving them.

Are you like David, setting yourself up for catastrophic failure, by choosing to enjoy the good life while others do the fighting for you?

Do you claim to be unequipped to serve while not taking advantage of the opportunities that are being offered to equip you to serve?