

Living Offensively: Go Together

Joshua 1:12-18

I. Living offensively takes all of us; 1:12-15.

¹² But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ¹³ "Remember the command that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.' ¹⁴ Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help your brothers ¹⁵ until the LORD gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

Joshua deals specially with the east of the Jordan tribes-Reuben Gad, and half of Manasseh. Joshua obeys Moses as God has commanded him. Here Joshua passes his first test, implementing Moses' earlier instructions concerning these tribes. They have already received their inheritance from Moses, land along the east banks of the Dead Sea and Jordan River. They have already begun to experience the long-awaited rest.

These east-bank Jordan tribes were required to keep unity with the other tribes settling west of the Jordan by helping them in the conquest. Only after the west-bank tribes finally have rest will Joshua dismiss the east-bank tribes to enjoy theirs. They form the tip of the Israelite spear-who lead the way. Theologically, Israel is not just a loose association of tribes but a single people.

The tasks that Jesus has given to us, require all of us. This is especially true of those who feel they are in times of life where they want to enjoy their rest and the fruit of their labors. "I've raised preschoolers, children, teens and I did my time. Let someone else work with them." Those tempted to remain in the rear, "being supportive", are often the ones with the experience and time who need to be the tip of the spear in fulfilling God's purposes and plans in the gospel.

II. Living offensively takes obedience; 1:16-18.

¹⁶ Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷ Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we

*will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses.
18 Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever
you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and
courageous!"*

The officials and the east-bank Jordan tribes joined together in affirming their loyalty to Joshua and his instructions. However, the Israelites had been a very disobedient people over the years, despite earlier promises to obey. When Moses brought them the laws that God had given him, they had solemnly sworn obedience, saying, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey". Yet, within a very short time, the people were complaining, rebelling, and even tried to kill Moses.

As if to underscore their allegiance, the Eastern tribes propose the penalty for disobedience. Whoever rebels will be put to death. It aims to curb the one thing that might derail their success-rebellion in the camp. The assumption is that rebellion is a capital crime, ranking alongside murder. Later the tribes actually impose the penalty here decreed on the disobedient Achan.

Joshua would not be able to rely on the people's obedience-despite their promises! Rather, his success would come from the Lord's presence, not from the people's obedience (or lack of it). "Only the LORD your God will be with you" is a statement of fact. The final "be strong and courageous" is the fourth time this appeal has appeared in the chapter, the first three coming from God Himself.

It's not someone else's responsibility. Living offensively as God's people and being successful in what He has called us to do takes all of us working together, even those who feel they have already done their part. We must be obedient to our Commander-in-chief's orders and move forward together. Unity is key for God's people to live offensive lives.

This is why the Bible stresses the unity of God's people so strongly. Rebellions thwart the progress of God's plan. They also squander the blessings that God desires His people to enjoy. God's people comprise a single body whose diverse parts live to support and enrich all the others. The warfare in which we are engaged may be spiritual rather than physical, but it is no less threatening. Only a healthy congregation, one whose members push each other on and hold each other up, will win any battles. That is why Jesus asks us to make unity, warm, genuine, mutual commitment to our fellow believers, our top priority. Only that kind of unity will compel the watching world to stop and take us seriously.