

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Supporting the War Effort

by Dan Trygg

“No soldier in active service entangles himself in the undertakings of everyday life, in order that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.” II Timothy 2:4

“In the same way, the Lord commanded those who preach the gospel to live out from the gospel.” I Corinthians 9:14

I am not old enough to have experienced the national effort that was promoted to support our troops in the Second World War. I have seen posters of “Rosy the Riveter”, and know she represented a massive influx of women into the work force to supply labor during that time of national conflict. Men were needed for the military, and women entered the work force in droves to help make munitions and military hardware, as well as to supply needed labor in many other industries. **This is a very blatant and somewhat extreme example from our national history that gives us a way to understand how God looks at the support of His Kingdom war effort.**

Of course, women were not the only ones in the work force. There were men who were, for one reason or another, either unable to go to war, or were given a deferment. They remained here, and worked in their jobs in the US. Although a total of 12,209,238 men served in the military from 1939-1945, this was less than 10% of the total population of the US during any one of those years. Nevertheless, nearly three-quarters of the families in the US had a family member involved in the military. Furthermore **the “war effort” was much larger than simply those who went to fight on a distant shore. The entire daily life experience of Americans was changed, as the country “tightened its belt” and focused its efforts and resources to beef up security, and to supply needed resources to our troops and our allies.** Food and gas rationing were common place. People planted “victory gardens” in an attempt to free up resources for the war. People with money purchased government bonds and war stamps to help raise funds. Production of consumer goods was widely redirected toward serving military interests. **People gave up luxuries and made sacrifices in order to help with the war effort,** or as a result of it. The newspapers, magazines and movie industries focused much of their reporting to buttress the support of the troops, and tried to build morale.

Clearly, **everyone understood that, if troops were going to successfully fight in another country, others at home would have to work and sacrifice in order to supply what they needed** in food and equipment in order to accomplish their mission. **We see the same thing in the Bible.** When the troops of Israel went out to battle, others were expected to help supply their needs. **The soldiers themselves were not expected to work part-time and fight part-time. They had to dedicate themselves fully to their military responsibilities,** as long as they were part of the conflict. The same reality impacts police forces, fire stations, and other public services in our society and around the world. In smaller communities, you might find a volunteer fire department, or a part-time constable, but as communities become larger, these responsibilities eventually become full-time positions. Why? Because **dedicated personnel are typically better trained and more effective** than those who are only able to give part-time attention to these needs and responsibilities. How are people able to devote themselves to a full-time position, unless they are publicly supported in some way? In our societies, this is usually accomplished by taxes.

The Kingdom of God is no different. From the time of the Exodus, when He moved beyond a personal relationship with an individual or a family to call an entire nation to Himself, **God made provision for a dedicated workforce of people who would preserve, copy and teach His Word,** serve in His tabernacle and judge disputes among people as representatives of God. **These people were not given farms or land to work to support themselves or their families, like the other Israelites. They were to be totally dedicated to God, and were to be supported by the tithe.** The tithe was a 10% tax or levy of all the produce of one’s farm, or profits from one’s business. **It was to be freely given as an offering to God as a sign of worship and tribute to Him.** In those days, such tribute offerings were made to kings or overlords as a sign of loyalty and an appeal for protection. So, in the mind of the Israelites, they offered loyalty and a 10% fealty payment to God as their King, and He promised to be with them, to protect them and care for them. It was a well-established, well-understood covenant arrangement from that time. **God instructed them to use these resources to support those He chose to be set apart from other daily business endeavors in order to serve Him.** He chose the tribe of Levi to be set apart in this fashion (Num. 18). The priests were one small family line within this much larger tribe of Israel. The tithe was to be used to support the Levites (Num. 18:21-24).

We have examples throughout Israel’s history of other people being called by God to dedicate themselves to Him. For example, when Elijah came to call Elisha to become his disciple, Elisha was plowing in the field. In response to Elijah’s call, he sacrificed the oxen which were pulling his plow, and cooked the meat over the

wood from his plow. He was leaving his farm to serve God full time, and he never went back (I Kg. 19:16-21). He, **Elijah and others who were full-time prophets were supported by the free-will offerings of other devout Israelites.** They recognized the hand of God in their lives, and they understood their dedication to Him. **They chose to honor God by meeting the needs of these men of God.** Men like Elijah and Elisha were not from the tribe of Levi, so their support did not come from the tithe. It was through freewill offerings given over and above the tithe which God had required. So, even in the OT, when God had made a clear provision to set aside an entire tribe to dedicate themselves to Him, and refrain from other work, He still would choose others from outside of this arrangement to consecrate themselves to Him. **People of good and God-honoring hearts recognized and valued their ministries, and chose to support them in their calling.** Furthermore, in Isaiah, **God foretold of a time when He would gather all nations and languages, and that He would also choose some of them to be as priests and Levites** (66:8-21). God would choose others from outside the Jewish people, or the tribe of Levi, to serve Him as dedicated servants, ...people called to leave other work in response to God's call.

In the NT, we have Jesus' example of leaving His carpentry business in order to dedicate Himself to full-time ministry. Furthermore, from His many disciples (followers), He chose twelve to be trained as apostles (sent-ones). **The point is made repeatedly that when Jesus called the twelve apostles, He required that they leave their businesses and other employment. They had to dedicate themselves exclusively to the ministry calling He had for them.** None of them were Levites, so *they were supported solely by the freewill offerings of others* who could recognize God's hand at work in their lives. Then, we have the apostle Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 9 in support of full time ministry for those who are preachers of the Word. He records that **Jesus directed (prescribed, instructed) to the ones preaching the gospel to live out from the gospel.** This was the norm that all the apostles, and the brothers of Jesus lived by (vs. 5). It is important to note, however, that this "*prescription*" was *not* something that was explicitly *commanded*. Paul himself, in the next few verses, records that he and Barnabus chose *not* to operate according to Jesus' "prescription", so **it was not meant as a binding command. It was meant as good, practical advice and instruction.** In Paul's case, he chose to work at making tents to support himself and his workers. Was he any less dedicated to God? No. Did his choice render him ineffective? Obviously not! He did have to sacrifice *more* and work *harder* as a result of his decision, however (I Cor. 15:9,10). It is like the workers on the wall during the time of Nehemiah, trying to work and carry things, while keeping their swords in their hands (Neh. 4:16-18). It *can* be done, but it is not easy. **Typically, the choice to work means that one's attention, time and efforts must be allocated in two directions. Jesus' prescription was meant to secure single-minded focus and the freedom to accomplish more.**

In spite of his personal choice to continue to work in his business to support his ministry, **we see Paul tell Timothy to stay clear of becoming entangled in the affairs of everyday life.** In that way, **he was to be like a soldier, who needed to keep himself freed up to be ready to serve the one who had enlisted him.** You see, *this* is the issue: **Our different callings are just that, ...different!** We have different duty assignments, ...different responsibilities. If we are active followers of the King, we are all in the Kingdom War Effort. **No one is "better" than anyone else. Everyone is vital to the Kingdom War Effort.** Some of us are *called* to leave our jobs and dedicate ourselves to ministry. Others of us are *called* to be faithful witnesses and stewards in our homes or workplaces. **Just being called to a different duty assignment does not make one person "more spiritual" than another.** The clergy-laity distinction that is often promulgated in religious circles has no basis in reality. Some believe that "pastors" are special, ...like they are more "holy", simply because they are pastors. NO! **We are all called "saints", "holy-ones"** (Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2). This means we have been set apart and dedicated *by God*, separated from those who do not know Christ, and called to live *for* God. This is our bottom-line status before God. Now **our response to that call may determine the depth of our intimacy with Christ and the level of our spiritual experience. But, our spirituality does not determine our duty assignment.** There are "pastors" who are selfish, carnal-minded, spiritually-immature people, ...and there are people who are working in everyday jobs, or who have family responsibilities that keep them at home, but they are spiritually in touch with God, and are actively, effectively serving Him within the confines of their calling. **Duty assignments in the Kingdom of God do not necessarily determine one's level of spiritual readiness or the quality of one's walk. But, our spiritual health and vitality will determine our effectiveness for the Kingdom of God, no matter what our duty assignment might be.**

If we are spiritually-minded, spiritually-vibrant in Christ, then we will see our role here on this planet as significant. **If we are called to serve God's Kingdom War Effort as support people,** doing our best to be engaged in God's work around us in the circumstances of our lives at our jobs and at home, **our responsibility is to go deep with Christ and develop a war-time mentality for the Kingdom of God. We should be willing to make sacrifices to support the calling and work of those whose duty assignments require that they free themselves from other entanglements to serve God as proclaimers and teachers of the Word of God.**