

Call to Obedience
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On Meddling

Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not—2 Chronicles 35:20-21.

To “meddle” is “to involve oneself in a matter often without invitation.” All of us have meddled and have been meddled with. Happy is the man who does not meddle in what is not his business. His burden is lighter and his days are brighter. However, every godly person is called upon to meddle, invited or uninvited.

We are our brothers’ keepers and must “meddle” to help the ungodly find everlasting life. James said, *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin* (James 4:17). When Paul addressed incest in one of the churches and drunkenness in another, he certainly was meddling appropriately. God speaks to all of us in Ezekiel: *When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood* (Ezek. 3:18 NIV). The Great Commission is a call to meddle. The backslider, the sinner, the Buddhist, the Muslim and the communists say: keep out, but Jesus says: go in.

There are two things that make most of us hesitate to meddle with the sins of others:

- 1) We feel that we have enough sin in our own lives that we have no right to meddle with the sins of our brothers. But Jesus’ plan of redemption is not for us to continue in our sins, but to get rid of them so that we can help our brother to get rid of his. Jesus said, *first take the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye* (Matt. 7:5 NIV). The moment you stop helping others to salvation, the rivers of life stop flowing into your heart (Rev. 12:11).
- 2) Many of us will not meddle with our brothers because of the fear of man. We are more concerned about preserving our popularity than losing our life for the gospel's sake.

Although we are called upon to meddle with men's souls, we are never called upon to meddle with God. Let us learn something from two great men who meddled with God.

King Josiah is one of the most under-advertised kings in Israel's history. He was a reformer, a revivalist and a great force for righteousness. *“And like unto him was there*

no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might ...neither after him arose there any like him" (2 Kings 23:25). Josiah had a spotless record for the 31 years of his reign! But just at the height of his spiritual life and success, he decided to meddle with God. He went to battle against the Egyptian king Necho who was passing by on his way to fight the Assyrians. Necho said: I am not against you! Don't meddle with me, for if you do so, you meddle with God. But Josiah went to war against Necho anyhow and was killed. Why did Josiah do this? Did he want to be king of Egypt also? What was in his mind? Josiah clearly stepped out of God's will by meddling with God. All meddling out of God's will is bad.

Moses led Israel admirably for 40 years: he was the meekest man on earth and he talked with God face to face. God told him to speak to the rock to turn it into a spring. That was God's plan. But here's what happened: *"And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice"* (Num. 20:10-11). Suddenly the "we" who used to be God and Moses now became Aaron and Moses. God was now shut out. Furthermore, Moses now called his sheep "rebels." When Moses was thinking "God and me," he had the grace to cope with the aggravation and sin of Israel. When it was "Aaron and me," he ceased being a shepherd and became a judge.

Let these stories suffice to demonstrate at least two common principles that are at work when the godly get into meddling, and they are:

1. Whenever, through a process of success and accomplishments in the work of God's ministry, HIS ministry becomes OUR ministry, we are at the meddling edge.

Both Josiah and Moses took the ministry away from God. Both of them suddenly, unbeknownst to themselves, had the "I" rise up within them. They had been blessed so long and were so successful that they came to think that they were not just representatives of God, but began to act as equal partners with Him. The result was that they no longer moved with Him, but ahead of Him. If we don't keep our hearts with all diligence, success can get to our heads and we will get into territories that are not ours to conquer; we will start ministries that are not ours to start; we will strike rocks we should speak to and we will put ourselves above others in judgment. We will meddle with God whom we claim to represent.

2. Whenever doing ministry becomes more important than walking with God on a consistent daily basis, we are at the meddling edge.

When you make walking with God a secondary thing to anything you do, you will not walk with God. Our first calling is always to walk with God, only then will His ministry flow out of us. Never let yourself think that Martha's choice to work was better than Mary's choice to rest at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:39-42). If we don't walk with God, if our ministry comes out of religious ambition, all our religious work will be wood, hay and stubble. Jesus said, *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be*

rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). God can do nothing through us until we walk with Him and abide with Him. Otherwise, all that we sow will be tares: look-alikes but not the real thing. God said to Abraham, "*walk before me and be thou perfect*" (Gen. 17:1). To Josiah and Moses, walking with God had moved to the back burner. It cost both their ministries.

Now, let us look at what went wrong with Josiah and Moses in the light of New Testament teachings on the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 18:3). This word "**and**" may be the most powerful conjunction in the whole Bible. There are two parts here. The conversion is a work of God. It is instantaneous. The entering in is the work of man. It is a process which requires forsaking all, humility and becoming as a little child. A little child is utterly dependent on its father for everything. Jesus said, *I can of mine own self do nothing* (John 5:30). That is what He means by becoming as little ones. It involves a coming to spiritual poverty, where we know all is of Him. Jesus built the whole Sermon on the Mount on this when He said, *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 5:3). Jesus preached more on the Kingdom of God than anything else: it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). There's no room here for independence: "I shall get water out of a rock" or for meddling with a Necho or striving for greater personal recognition. There is no room here for showmanship. So as utter dependence on God will get us into the Kingdom, pride and independence will take us back out. And pride always takes us into shameful meddling with God and inappropriate meddling with man.

Now, being practical: among the first to know that we are out of the Kingdom are our spouses. The wife of a man of God is like a canary in a coal mine. When there is a slight amount of poison gas, the canary dies. Once a man has crossed over from God's ministry to his ministry, from walking with God to running his religious machinery, he becomes harsh, demanding, inconsiderate and neglectful of the needs of his wife. The wife now becomes a maid, a servant or a secretary. She is the first to get the gas, the children are next; soon the poison spreads to others. And my friend, the frequent claims of "we give God all the glory" now only serve as a smokescreen to cover a fallen man.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)

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