

Judges 18:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land.

Analysis

And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. The spies' exhortation mimics faithful language from conquest narratives—"arise" (qumah, קוּמָה), "go up" (na'aleh, נִעְלֶה), "the land...is very good" (ha'arets...tovah me'od, הָאֶרֶץ...טוֹבָה מְאֹד). The phrase "very good" echoes God's assessment of creation (Genesis 1:31) and Caleb's description of Canaan (Numbers 14:7), giving their proposal spiritual veneer. Yet unlike Caleb's faith-filled report about God's promised land, this describes territory God never assigned to Dan.

The rebuke "are ye still?" (attem mithmahmehim, אַתֶּם מִתְמַהֲמְהִים) means "are you hesitating?" or "delaying?" The command "be not slothful" (al te'atselu, אַל-תִּעְצְלוּ) uses atsel (עָצַל, "lazy/sluggish"), language Proverbs applies to the fool who refuses work (Proverbs 6:6-11, 24:30-34). The irony is profound: the truly slothful course was abandoning their assigned territory to seek easier conquest elsewhere. True diligence would have been persevering to possess what God had given them. From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates how sin deceives—calling faithfulness "slothful" and disobedience "zealous."

Historical Context

The spies' rhetoric was persuasive precisely because it employed familiar language from Israel's conquest tradition. By framing their proposal in terms recalling Joshua's faithful leadership, they made abandonment of God's assignment seem like obedient faith. This illustrates how false teaching often succeeds by appropriating biblical language while contradicting biblical truth—a pattern warned against throughout Scripture (2 Corinthians 11:13-15, 2 Peter 2:1-3). The tribe, already predisposed toward the easier path, readily accepted this religiously packaged disobedience.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does sin deceive us by using spiritual language to justify unspiritual choices?
2. What safeguards help us distinguish between genuine zeal for God's purposes and worldly ambition dressed in religious vocabulary?
3. In what areas might you be calling God's difficult assignment 'impossible' while calling your preferred easier path 'faithful'?

Interlinear Text

כִּי עָלֶיהָ ׀ וְנָעַל הָ קָ וְמָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ
And they said **Arise** **that we may go up** H5921 H3588
H559 H6965 H5927

טוֹב הָ וְהִנֵּה הָ הָאֶרֶץ: אֶת רָא יָנוּ
against them for we have seen H853 **the land** H2009 **good**
H7200 H776 H2896

לֵךְ כָּת תַּעֲצֹל וְ אֵל מְחַשׁ יִם וְאַתָּה ׀ מֵאֵד
and behold it is very H859 **and are ye still** H408 **be not slothful** H1980
H3966 H2814 H6101

הָאֶרֶץ: אֶת לֵךְ שֵׁת לֵב א
and to enter **to possess** H853 **the land**
H935 H3423 H776

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 13:30 (Parallel theme): And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

Joshua 18:3 (Parallel theme): And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?