

Iron Chariots

Ponder: Rationalizations and excuses

Scripture: “all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron” (Josh. 17:16, NKJV).

When the people of Manasseh and Ephraim complained that Joshua hadn't given them a large enough allotment in the promised land of Canaan, Joshua challenged them to make better use of what they had. Clear some of the forest! Drive out the hostile Canaanite tribes! You can do this!

But then the rationalizing and excuse-making started. The mountains weren't adequate, and the Canaanites in the valley had iron chariots. Who wants to go up against such formidable enemies? We could be killed! Just give us some extra land and everything will be fine.

How grievously disappointed must Joshua have been! Had these Israelites already forgotten how the Lord delivered their fathers in Egypt? Didn't they remember the ten devastating plagues which proved that the Lord was infinitely superior to the idols of Egypt? Instead of whining about Canaanites with iron chariots, why didn't they recall the chariots of Pharaoh that were rusting at the bottom of the Red Sea at that very moment? Even more recently in their battles with various Canaanites, they had witnessed the fulfillment of God's promise: “five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight” (Lev. 26:8). Now, however, they had shifted their focus from God to Canaanite chariots. Consequently, their faith dwindled.

Like the ancient Israelites, we make excuses and rationalize our failure to use the resources God has given us to serve Him. We have our own “iron chariots” that we allow to discourage us. The “grasshopper complex” is alive and well (see Num. 13:33).

Lost Souls need the gospel; hurting hearts need compassion and comfort; the sick and infirm need encouragement and prayer. Can they count on us? Let us abandon our excuses and start using the resources, opportunities, and abilities God has given us! Let us rely on His power to overcome any and all obstacles. As the old Nike shoe commercial said, “Just do it!”

Song: “To The Work, To The Work”

Prayer: Father, forgive us for focusing on obstacles rather than on Your power to overcome them. Help us, we pray, to trust and obey. In Jesus' name, Amen.