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VOLUNTEERS

I'm In The Lord's Army

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My home for the past 40 years in Minnesota is labeled "The Land Of 10,000 Lakes" because of its 14,382 documented lakes.

(FYI: The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources describes a lake as a body of water that measures at least 10 acres or more; it also says Minnesota lakes are calculated to be 4,600 square miles, the size of the state of Connecticut).

While I'm proud to be a Minnesotan, I was born and raised a Tennessean. I lived in "The Volunteer State" for the first eighteen years of my life. It got this designation because of its spirit of service when called during wars. In the War of 1812, General Andrew Jackson, a Tennessean, led his volunteer troops to a great victory at the Battle of New Orleans. Then, in the Mexican – American War of 1848, President James K. Polk, another Tennessean, called for his state to provide 2,800 volunteers. They responded when over 30,000 stepped forward to fight! Thus, volunteerism became the hallmark image of this proud southern state. I've rooted for the Tennessee Vols sports teams since childhood. I've also tried to live up to its slogan in all areas of my life.

To have the spirit of a volunteer, you don't have to come from Tennessee; just as you don't have to be from Minnesota to enjoy a lake. But I have the volunteer attitude driven deep within me, as do all true disciples of Christ. The church should be a breeding ground of excited workers for the Lord. Isaiah 6:8 is engraved on our business card, with these words printed in red:

"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

When a Christian is asked by someone as to who we are, we say with a smile on our face, and joy in our voice, "We are Psalm 110 people!" When they reply, "What does that mean?" we quote for them this Messianic prophecy that speaks of Christ's future church:

¹ **The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."**

² **The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!**

³ **Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power..."**

"Your people shall be volunteers." I just love that, don't you? Other translations say it this way.

"Your troops will be willing on your day of battle" (NIV).

"Your people will volunteer on your day of battle" (CSB).

"When you go to war, your people will serve you willingly" (NLT).

The reference is obvious; there is no draft in the army of the Lord. It is all-volunteer! Every potential soldier has come to the recruiting station and offered unconditional service to his King. *"Here am I, send me!"*

It is not like the days of Israel when all men twenty years of age and up were drafted into military service (Numbers 1:45-46). Also, it was not like being physically born into the covenant of God, as were all Israelites, regardless of faith or commitment. Instead, Jeremiah longed to see this future all-volunteer army when he prophesied of future servant-soldiers:

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Jeremiah 31:31-34

No draft. No being volun-told. No surprises. No hidden fine print. No high-pressure sales pitch. In fact, the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10), reminds every potential soldier to think long and hard before signing on the dotted line. He laid it all on the table so every prospect would clearly know what he was committing to. Hear His strange recruiting spiel (Luke 14:26-33):

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

It’s like the Marine Corps recruiter explaining reality to the excited 18-year-old who envisions combat medals and future glory as one of “the few, the proud, the Marines.” But, at bootcamp, reality sets in during the grueling 13 weeks of physical and psychological testing. All they knew in civilian life is buried, and a soldier’s life is slowly, but surely, embedded into them. About 15% quit. The other 85% are probably tempted to, but don’t.

Jesus revealed the same is true in His parable of the sower. In the rocky soil He described eager converts who had not counted the cost. When the first trials and persecutions came, they resigned (Matthew 13:20-21).

However, the story is not over. Jesus worked His way to the fourth soil, the good soil, to show us those glorious volunteers who endured basic training, going on to earn 30, or 60, or even 100-fold yields in their life. When called to enlist, these volunteers who chose to accept the difficult and narrow way over the easy and broad way (Matthew 7:13-14), would live to hear their Captain say,

“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” Matthew 25:23

I am proud to be a Tennessee volunteer. But I am prouder still to be Christ’s volunteer. He is even now at His recruiting station, calling out to every soul, *“Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* But be forewarned, the rest comes only to those who forsake the easy life, including their very life, to become Christ’s disciple.

“Your people shall be volunteers!” He will have it no other way. Come join us.