
Words of Truth

Sometimes You Have To Leave Yourself Vulnerable

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In regard to our living among sinners in this world, God says: *“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time”* (Colossians 4:5). It is right for us to be a people who are “on guard” (so to speak). Jesus warned the twelve to “beware of men” (Matthew 10:16-17). People of the world do not care about their own souls, let alone your soul or mine. Generally speaking, each is out for his or her own good in carnal ways. We’d be fools not to realize that and not be on guard against it.

This is where being a Christian who tries to save the souls of the lost becomes a delicate and often difficult area. To be on guard and at the same time not be too guarded is a fine line to walk. It is not easy to use Jesus as a parallel example either. Before anyone jumps on that statement, I am full well aware that Jesus is our example to follow (I Corinthians 11:1 and I John 2:3-6). What I am saying is that this particular matter is one wherein Jesus did walk according to a different standard, to a degree, than you and I. Jesus came specifically to be abused and die (Luke 9:22). That was His purpose in “this life” (Mark 10:45, John 6:51, and Hebrews 2:8-9). It is also difficult to parallel Jesus to what we do ON THIS MATTER, because He “*knew all men*” and “*knew what was in man*” (John 2:24-25). This caused His work to be slightly different (and more difficult) than ours because He picked the times, knowing what men were planning, wherein He allowed Himself to be vulnerable (John 7:1-8, John 8:20, and John 10:39-42; cf. Matthew 26:26-57) for our salvation to be possible (Titus 2:11-14).

While “how” and “why” Jesus did what He did in being vulnerable may not be directly possible for us to follow, that does not mean there is not a pattern there for us. The fact is, there is something in what Jesus did that we are to follow. Notice: *“For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”* (I Peter 2:19-23).

So, how do we balance being aware of men and following the example of Christ in being willing to suffer for others to be saved? That is what we are going to examine in this study. We know, as Christians, there are going to be times wherein we suffer for the sake of righteousness (Matthew 5:10-12, John 15:19-21, John 16:33, Acts 14:22, and II Timothy 3:12). Our question is, what criteria do we use as to when to make ourselves vulnerable and when not to? Understand this before we proceed, I am sure we cannot cover “all the bases” on this subject in this short study. What we’ll aim for is a better grasp of when not to guard too much.

When Not To Guard Too Much

There is no Scriptural way to conclude there is ever a time wherein we are to be completely off guard. Being aware (Matthew 16:6, I Corinthians 16:13, Philippians 3:1-3, Colossians 2:8, and Revelation 3:2) and sober (Titus 2:2, Titus 2:6, I Peter 1:13, I Peter 4:7, and I Peter 5:8) are attributes of faithful Christians. Being cautious of others causing us to fall away is always right (Proverb 4:14-15, Proverbs 13:20, I Corinthians 15:33, and II Peter 2:1-3). We are even supposed to be aware of our own selves and any ways wherein we could be tempted by our own desires (Matthew 26:41 and I Peter 2:11). Considering all of those points, we should be able to see how hard it could be to let our guard down, even just a tiny bit.

A tiny bit is just what we must do to help others though. We live in a wicked world (I John 5:19). However, we have work to do here (Matthew 5:14-16, II Corinthians 4:1-7, and Philippians 2:14-16). You cannot teach someone if you steer clear of them. You cannot rescue someone from sin if you will not open yourself up to some levels of vulnerability. In teaching the lost sometimes you'll be vulnerable to personal loss (Luke 6:22 and Acts 8:1-4). In teaching the lost sometimes you'll be vulnerable to emotional distress (Romans 9:1-3).

There has to be a time wherein we accomplish the spiritual mindset of being willing to put the souls of others before our own personal interests (I Corinthians 10:32-33 and Philippians 2:3-4). We see this in the life of the Apostle Paul. Like Christ, we are to follow his example (I Corinthians 4:16), though there may be times wherein exact parallels are not there. Paul is a great example of one who let down his guard enough to help others without letting down his guard enough to be lost.

Paul - An Example Of The Balance

Notice: *"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (I Corinthians 9:19-27).

Conclusion

Be on guard (I Thessalonians 5:1-6). However, balance that. Allow yourself to be open enough to even suffer some losses for the sakes of others (Acts 20:17-24). There may even be times when the foreseeable events may lead to our harm. At those times, we may have to have the mindset of "the will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21:8-14). At the proverbial "end of the day", don't guard yourself to the damnation of others and then yourself!