

Kick The Dust Off (part 1)

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“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven... A time to search, and a time to give up as lost; a time to keep, and a time to throw away” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6). Through the inspired writer, God admits that there are times when we must give up seeking certain things. More significant responsibilities may lead us to determine that the risks involved in searching for someone are too great to justify our involvement. Whether it is trying to win an argument, seeking the perfect automobile, or saving somebody from his or her habitual sins, we must make some difficult decisions when it comes to how much we are willing to invest in a pursuit.

It is most significant to notice this idea in the realm of spiritual work. How far are we willing to go to help save somebody? Is there a proper point at which we need to move on to other evangelistic opportunities, or should our quest for a single soul become an all-consuming odyssey?

“Lest I Myself Should Be Disqualified”

In Jude 23, the author states, *“Have mercy on some with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”* It is clear that in our endeavors to seek and save the lost, we will encounter people suffering in terrible, even abominable, sins. It is the Christian’s job to teach the Gospel to these people – the verse clearly teaches that we must *“have mercy”* in spite of the risks. At the same time, however, we must balance our desire to save others with the need to save ourselves. *“With fear”* seems to indicate that some discretion needs to be applied in our evangelism. In other words, seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10) is a pursuit that is admirable, but not without some healthy prudence to temper the enthusiasm. It is an unfortunate truth that some people in this world cannot be trusted – there are villains who want nothing more than to destroy and abuse the people of God for their own malicious desires. Also, there are people who live in ignorance of their own contagiousness, and are completely unaware of how Satan is working to tempt them. For example, preachers often become lightning rods for the attractions of sin-laden women. While some preachers take advantage of this situation for their own gratification (2 Timothy 3:6), other preachers do not realize how attractive they are when they offer spiritual guidance to these women. *“When a woman is crying on your shoulder, be careful! I am not suggesting that every woman who comes to you is out to get you... I am simply pointing out that because she is hurting, your tendency will be to offer comfort. This comfort can easily be misinterpreted and lead to sin. Always maintain a professional distance”* (*Preparing the Young Man to Preach*, Kercheville, 124).

How sad it is when preachers of the Gospel become so engrossed in their evangelistic efforts that they neglect their own spiritual needs! Some preachers lose control of their personal lives, their children, their marriages, and even the regulation of their own desires. Even Paul admits in 1 Corinthians 9:27 that he needed to buffet his body daily, *“lest after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”* According to Paul, it is imperative that each of us keep ourselves from the precipice of sin before worrying about others – sin is a very real possibility, even for Christians as strong and devoted as Paul!

Furthermore, he goes on to write in Galatians 6:1, *“Brethren, if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself so that you too will not be tempted.”* While it is imperative that we restore our sinful brothers and sisters to the grace of God with such a spirit of gentleness and mercy, we must keep a good watch over our own souls as well.

Hitting the Brick Wall

There are times, friends, when we must accept that some people do not want to be saved. As sad as it may be, we have an obligation to move on and seek other fields of evangelism – we cannot spend our entire lives trying to save one stubborn person when there are so many receptive souls just waiting to be led in the right direction. Our Lord exhorts us in this effort in Matthew 10:14. *“And whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet.”* As long as we preach the Word to the best of our ability, then we are not held responsible for those who reject its message. Without regret, we must give up, move on, shake off the dust from our feet, and seek another listener. There are so many people who need to hear the Gospel, and our Lord described it best when He said, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest”* (Matthew 9:37-38).