

Taking Action When Action Is Uncalled For (2)

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Impetuous Hearts

The example of Korah's rebellion, which we looked at in our last article, illustrates what happens to those who make decisions impetuously. They rush in, like the old saying – *Fools rush in where angels fear to tread* – and bring destruction upon themselves. Have I done the same things in my own life? Consider:

- Do I rush to judgments when I am offended by what somebody else is saying? Do I assume the worst because I am too quick to defend myself and my actions?
- Are there Bible concepts that I take too far, or passages that I have stretched beyond their context (Matthew 7:1, John 8:7, 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, Romans 14)?
- Do I rush in and out of romantic relationships on a whim?
- Have I assumed the worst about another Christian because I heard gossip and chose to believe it instead of confront him or her?
- Am I quick to argue with somebody from another religion, stubbornly pushing a point until the door for evangelism is closed?
- Am I quick to voice opinions in Bible class, using it as an opportunity to push an agenda rather than learn the truth?
- Am I approaching the Lord's Supper with an improper heart? It is not uncommon to rush in to it without properly setting our minds on the sacrifice of Christ. This is especially significant because of the warning given in 1 Corinthians 11:26-29. "*So let a man examine himself*" before partaking of the supper!

It is important to remember the role that patience plays in the Christian life. There are few concepts or activities that are not made better with at least a little patience applied to them – Our love (1 Corinthians 13:4), our speech and our anger (James 1:19), our treatment of each other (Ephesians 4:2), our teaching (2 Timothy 4:2), the way we approach suffering (1 Peter 2:20), our attitude toward the coming of the Lord (James 5:7-8). The writer of Ecclesiastes summed it up well with the words, "*Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit*" (Ecclesiastes 7:8).

What About Courage?

I like that impetuosity and courage are not the same thing in Joshua 1:7, which says, "*Only be strong and courageous; be careful to do according to all the law...*" Sometimes we assume that our impetuous attitude is a sign of courage. We justify foolish action by mistakenly assuming that it is virtuous to plow on through life in every circumstance. We hear the words "*Sometimes you have to run before you can walk!*" or "*Shoot first and ask questions later!*" Bullheadedness is a common character trait of our heroes. Yet one of the greatest heroes ever, Joshua, a man of renown whose bravery in battle could never be questioned, believed that courage and caution went hand in hand. Being careful to obey God, living deliberately and treading lightly, was an integral part of the "strong and courageous" Israelite.

The true follower of God is not one who goes through life haphazardly – making messes, complicating dilemmas, rushing to judgments, quick to show his temper. Rather, he is thoughtful, often cautious, and always purposeful. His body is buffeted daily (1 Corinthians 9:24ff) for the purpose of self-discipline. He knows the will of the Lord, not because of gut feelings or rash, outlandish conclusions, but because he has put everything to the test of scripture. Korah started a rebellion because he took action when none was necessary. His agenda clouded his judgment and his followers were destroyed for their lack of respect to God. In another example, from 1 Samuel 13, King Saul rushed to do something that was profane because he felt he was justified. He lost his kingdom because of a failure to properly apply the commands of God. Jesus warns us all about the attitude of the person who rushes in before really thinking through his actions (Luke 14:28-32).