

## “The Danger of Saying Yes”

### Hebrews 11:32-38

Many people know in their hearts they ought to completely surrender their lives to God. And they really want to, but they hold back because they are afraid, not of God, but of the devil whom they fear will assault them if they take such a step. These people live like a cat trapped in a tree while a bulldog waits on the ground below. They're not happy where they are, but dare not try to escape for fear of arousing the bulldog.

Over the past few weeks we've listened as the author of Hebrews described the kind of faith that saves us. We learned it's a deep, transformational, costly faith like that which we see in the men and women listed in chapter 11. And it's been wonderful to see how many people have raised their hands to say “yes” to that kind of faith. But over the years I've heard the comment, “Every time I say ‘yes’ to God the devil attacks me.” So this week let's remember some of the powerful ways God protects His children. It's easy to say “yes” to the victories we find in verses 32-34, but it's hard to say “yes” to the hardships we find in verses 35-38.

#### **A. Does God promise a trouble-free life?**

No, He actually warns us that if we follow His Son we will face rejection, persecution and the schemes of the devil.

- 1) Psalm 34:19 – “many are the afflictions...”
- 2) Matthew 5:10-16 – “those who have been persecuted...”
- 3) Matthew 10:34-37 – “...I came to set a man against his father...”
- 4) John 15:18-21 – “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you”

#### **B. How does God promise to protect us?**

- 1) Psalm 91:5-16 – Angels
- 2) Isaiah 30:21 – Guidance “your ears will hear...”
- 3) Matthew 6:25-34 – Miraculous provision
- 4) Mark 11:24 – Answered prayer
- 5) Luke 10:19, 20 – Authority over the demonic (note: v 19 “nothing will injure you”)
- 6) 1 John 4:4 – Spirit “...greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world”
- 7) Mark 10:29, 30 – A new spiritual family
- 8) Matthew 28:20 – Jesus' presence at all times



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### C. How do we reduce trouble?

Though our obedience to Christ will produce certain kinds of trouble, it will also greatly reduce most areas of trouble and provide a place of safety.

- 1) Don't provoke it by foolishness or temper
  - Matthew 10:16 "wise as serpents, harmless as doves"
- 2) Don't alienate people
  - Aggressive reconciliation
  - Romans 12:18 – "insofar as you are able be at peace with all"
- 3) Don't give the devil a handle
  - Holiness
  - 1 Peter 4:12-16
  - John 8:34 – "...everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (2Pe 2:19)
- 4) Do what the Bible commands
  - Obey by faith: expect to be blessed
  - Don't give yourself permission to keep sinning ("God's okay with this")
- 5) Listen to the Spirit
  - Isaiah 30:21 – "Your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or left."
  - Discernment, guidance, warning
- 6) Stay full of the Spirit
  - Galatians 5:16-25
  - Empowered to live free from compulsive forces (immorality, jealousy, anger, drunkenness)
- 7) Be a good steward of your body
  - Nutrition, sleep, exercise
- 8) Stay attached to the Body of Christ
  - 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 – There is a divine protection over the church
  - Like a wolf or a shark, the devil tries to isolate his victim
- 9) Obey what you hear God speak to you.
  - Live where He tells you to live, do what He tells you to do, marry who He tells you to marry
- 10) Honor your father and mother
  - Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2, 3
- 11) Consistently pray for God's protection and lay hands on your loved ones.
  - Matthew 6:13 – "Delivers us from evil"

There is a place of divine safety and care but it comes through obedience, not automatically because you're a Christian. The challenge for a new believer is to learn quickly the ways of God and seek to obey them. Oddly, some people will radically obey God as a new believer, but then over time relax their obedience and allow trouble to seep back into their lives.

NOTE: You don't have to know why a thing works to enjoy its benefits. You just need to know how.

- a) Most of us couldn't explain why our car works, but we know how to drive it here
- b) You don't need to know why Jesus commands certain things to receive the blessing. You just need to obey. Understanding may come later.

### D. Can we guarantee that trouble will never come?

- 1) Persecution is a promise: those who hate Jesus will hate you.
  - Hebrews 11:33-38
- 2) We are still affected by the bad choices of others.
  - We are part of families, companies, neighborhoods, cities, nations...
- 3) Sin has brought trouble into the natural structures of the world
  - Weather, genetics, air, food sources, disease-causing viruses and bacteria, stress...
  - These originated from the devil and sin but they strike people indiscriminately.
  - Trouble doesn't necessarily mean a person sinned or us being attacked by a demon.
- 4) Our society can welcome in demonic activity that produces oppression, harassment and disease.



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### **E. Perspective**

Remember, trouble also comes to those who don't fully surrender to Christ.

- 1) If you make a deal with the devil, sooner or later he's going to turn on you.
- 2) He delights to betray and destroy.
- 3) Psalm 73
- 4) God is patient, but in time He will trouble the unrighteous. If not here then in eternity.
- 5) Some people will not face their need for God until they're on life support.

### **F. What are the choices?**

- 1) Living a fully-surrendered life as Christ's disciple, carefully staying under God's protection.
- 2) Trying to be a minimal Christian so I'll still get to heaven, but so passive and worldly, the devil won't bother me.
- 3) Stubbornly refusing to surrender until God Himself has to trouble me.

### **G. Conclusion**

Those who serve the Lord as His surrendered disciples will still face trouble. Persecution in various forms always arises because those who hate Jesus will naturally hate His followers. However, obedience to God's Word can greatly reduce the kinds of trouble we would bring upon ourselves and the opportunities the devil has to hurt us. And if trouble does come, we can count on God's constant care.

Though the devil may initially test our resolve after we make the decision to fully surrender, hoping to frighten us back into passivity, by enduring in our commitment we will overcome him and see God's blessing in this life as well as the next.

### **H. Questions:**

- 1) Has the thought ever crossed your mind, "If I go all out for God, the devil's going to beat me up"? How did you respond?
- 2) What would you tell a person who says, "I have a history in which every time I said 'yes' to God, trouble has come"? What has been your own personal experience?
- 3) Do you feel you are living in a place of God's safety or do you feel exposed?