

Which Is Easier?

"For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

Matthew 9:5-6

This passage in Jesus' life teaches us a very valuable lesson. It is our obligation to reprove and rebuke sin (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The child of God must stand firm in a world of ungodliness which can weaken our faith. Unfortunately, sometimes we must rebuke our own brethren and other people very close to us. Paul learned that lesson when he had to confront Peter in Galatians 2:11. Very often, this can be a bitter pill to swallow.

Hopefully, everyone who is ever put in this position reproves and rebukes sin with love. Several times in the gospels, Jesus taught the multitudes because He felt compassion for them. That compassion compelled Him to try and make them right before God. The obligation to reprove sin must always come from a genuine concern for the other person's soul (Mark 12:31; 1 Corinthians 16:14). To set someone straight before God is absolutely the best work anyone could ever do (James 5:19-20). Never underestimate all the good that trying to save someone's soul will do.

However, there will come a time when you realize that your brother or sister in Christ or your friend, family member, etc., may not appreciate your input to their problem of sin. Most of us do not like to be told that we are wrong; it just simply goes against our nature. They may feel like you are "butting in" where you do not belong. This can certainly put a lot of stress on a relationship. Even though you are doing this for the common good of that person, the problem still arises about what to do about their hostility.

Jesus used the situation in Matthew 9:1-6 very effectively to His advantage, and so can you. In order to prove that He had power to forgive sins, He was willing to do the "more difficult" event. Healing the paralytic man was really no more difficult a task to the Lord, but the people around Him did not perceive it that way. Therefore, He was willing to do heal the lame man in order to demonstrate His power.

When speaking to someone about their soul, you need to ask yourself the question, "Which is easier?" Is it easier for me to neglect this person

and never say a word about their wrongdoing? You sure could remain someone's friend that way. They would continue to speak to you and be sociable, but they would remain in sin. On the other hand, is it easier for me to go to them and reason with them concerning their soul's condition? You sure could make someone mad and run them off that way, or they could repent and obey the gospel or be restored.

It is obvious that the first question is easier. But it is also the one which will do little good. Jesus could have simply told that paralytic man that his sins were forgiven and dropped the matter. That course of action, although certainly healing the palsied man, would not have convinced anyone of Jesus' power. Something else was needed. In the same manner, something more is needed to convict someone of sin than vague talk. Sometimes, you will have to sit down with that person and maturely discuss their sin.

Jesus was willing to walk the hard road in order to accomplish great things. If you go and deal with others with love, there is a much greater chance that you will be successful (Colossians 3:14). Love can accomplish much. Lord willing, because of your love for them, they will see the error of their ways and turn back to God.

Hopefully, those in sin will also see clearly what you are trying to accomplish: a genuine desire to save their soul. It is not an effort to cause division or make someone mad, although that is sometimes an inevitable result. We approach people because we love them and we want to see them saved. There can be no hidden motives. We must work from a pure and honest heart. So if someone comes and wishes to speak to you about your sins, you ask yourself, "Which is easier?"

Kyle Campbell