

Upholding the Weak

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Who did the Lord consider weak?

1. Matt. 12:9-21
2. Jesus would heal and then instruct the people to tell no one. Why?
 - a. Jesus did not need the testimony of others at this point. Not only would the attention be premature, He was drawing attention to Himself without word of mouth.
 - b. He didn't want people following just for the miracles - John 6:26
3. The quote from Isaiah gives deeper insight - Isa. 42:1-4

B. The Pharisees were seeking to destroy Jesus

1. Jesus was not afraid to confront them; He performed a miracle on the Sabbath in front of the Pharisees, knowing it would anger them.
2. But when they plotted to kill him, He withdrew and asked those He healed not to talk of it.

C. Matt. 12:20 - The Pharisees were the bruised reed and the smoking flax.

1. Jesus could have pressed the issue, but it wasn't in the best interest of the souls of the Pharisees and the collateral multitude.
2. If they were ever to have an opportunity to repent, Jesus had to give them time to think about His teachings and apply its meaning.
3. Some Pharisees became believers; if one soul is saved, it is worth the effort - Acts 6:7, 18:8, 15:5
 - a. But Jesus had to wound their pride and shake them out of their stubbornness and sins.
 - b. Rubbing salt into the wound would not improve matters. He withdrew, not from fear, but to give the Pharisees an opportunity to repent.
 - c. And even though many did not, His generous and patient spirit toward them was noticed by the rest of the world, who in turn would be drawn closer to the Lord because of it.
4. A bruised reed is twisted or bent to the point that any more pressure would break it off completely. Smoldering flax is a wick that is just about to go out. Too much breath would snuff it completely.
5. Both are symbols of a weak, feeble, misguided faith. Wrong must be opposed, but the goal is to bring people to God, not to drive the wicked away because "I'm right and they are all wrong."
 - a. 2Tim. 2:24-26 - Do not begin with the assumption that all sinners and erring brethren are reprobates

D. 1Thes. 5:14 - The word of God commands that we get involved and uphold the weak

1. "Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral." (Paulo Freire)

2. "Respect the old, when you are young. Help the weak, when you are strong. Forgive the fault, when you are right. Because, one day in life you'll be old, weak, and mistaken."

I. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN GOD'S WILL

- A. God has always required His people to comfort the faint hearted, uphold the weak, and be patient with everyone.
- B. Deut. 24:17; Psalm 10:18, 41:1, 82:3-4; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 22:16
- C. Gal. 6:1-2 - The New Testament commands that Christians restore the wayward with gentleness
 1. Some religions zealously convert people with the sword -- Islam.
 2. Some religions manipulatively control people with cultic practices
 3. Contrast this with Jesus' statement - John 18:36
- D. Christ and Paul seemed weak and timid to some because of their gentle teaching. But the boldness and strength is apparent in the truth they preached
 1. 2Cor. 10:1, 17-18
 2. 1Cor. 9:22 - It was done so Paul could save the weak.

II. IT IS WHAT WILL SAVE THE WEAK

- A. The weak are not encouraged to remain weak, but tenderly nurtured in order to grow to full strength. If the weak are going to be saved, this is what will bring them to it
 1. The bruised reed is gently straightened, bound, and protected until it can stand on its own. The smoldering flax is gently breathed upon until its flame flares to full strength.
- B. Growth is essential to putting evil from our lives - 2Peter 3:17-18
 1. Growth is a process, not an immediate action
- C. Imitate Christ and encourage the weak to become strong - Rom. 15:1-7
- D. Support the weak by helping to clear their path of obstacles - Heb. 12:12-15
 1. Job was known for this - Job 4:3-5
 2. This is the example that Christ and Paul left for us - Acts 20:35
- E. Notice how often patience is mentioned in these passages. Instant fixes are extremely rare. We need to bind the broken and then given them time to heal. This is why Jesus withdrew for a time after conflict.

III. THERE IS HOPE

- A. Not all will repent or be restored. Many will not respond to this.
- B. But the souls that are saved by it are worth every sacrifice - James 5:19-20
- C. "The world does not consist of 100 percent Christians and 100 percent non-Christians. There are people (a great many of them) who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but who are still called by that name, and some of them are clergymen. There are other people who are slowly becoming Christians, though they are not yet called so." (C.S. Lewis)