

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

In warfare the wounded are picked up and immediate care is given to them, but in cases where a soldier is captured this is more difficult. Often a search and rescue mission follows in order to find and release him/her from captivity. Likewise, as Christian soldiers we are called upon to not only do battle but be aware of those who are falling in their Christian life, or are caught in a trap of Satan. Spiritual warfare, therefore, demands not only that we stand strong but that we do what we can to see that all God's army is standing strong, too. It is for that reason we will deal with wounded and captured soldiers in this study. The tragic and permanent failure of some believers doesn't need to happen! There are biblical ways to restore a fallen brother or sister. I want to suggest wise intervention is needed to help a wounded and captive soldier. We need to put feet to our prayers and follow the instruction of 2 Timothy 2:22-26.

In 1 Samuel 31:1-6, we find the sad ending of a fallen soldier whose death is even more tragic because he was not just wounded in battle. The most deadly of his wounds were spiritual in nature, self-inflicted prior to the battle by his own sinful actions. What a tragic ending. The soldier's name? Saul, the first king of Israel.

Saul had so much going for him in the beginning. He had regal bearing, yet was humble in heart. First Samuel 9:1-2 says—*"There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish. . . 2] He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others."* (See also 10:16,21-22,27.) Saul was anointed by Samuel to be king, and for awhile he was extraordinary in battle—1 Sam. 11. Something went wrong, however, and pride, disobedience and jealousy took over his life. Eventually David was anointed to take his place as king—1 Sam. 13-16. Saul died a man totally given over to fits of rage (1 Sam. 18-19), and one who consulted a witch for advice—1 Sam. 28. What a waste! It didn't need to happen this way.

It is for this reason we will deal with wounded and captured soldiers in our study. The tragic and permanent failure of some believers does not need to happen! There are biblical ways to restore a fallen brother or sister. Ephesians 6 tells us to put on the full armor of God, and when fully armed we are assured that we will be able to stand our ground against the devil's schemes, *"against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms"* —Eph. 6:12-13.

The implication is, however, that if we do *not* fully arm ourselves, we may lose a battle and even be caught in a foothold (Eph. 4:27) or trap of Satan (2 Tim. 2:26), or be injured by fiery darts—Eph. 6:16.

Intervention

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In warfare, the wounded are picked up and given immediate care, but in cases of captured soldiers this is more difficult. Often a search and rescue mission follows in order to find and release him/her from captivity. As Christian soldiers, we are called upon not only to do battle but to be aware of those who are falling in their Christian lives or caught in a trap of Satan. Spiritual warfare, then, demands not only that we stand strong, but that we do what we can to see that all God's army is standing strong, too.

Listen to what Scripture says concerning our response and our challenge to help wounded and captured soldiers:

.James 5:19-20—"My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20] remember this: Whoever turns a sinner away from his error will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins." (See ["Prone To Wander"](#))
—James 5:19-20.)

Romans 15:1—"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves."

1 Thessalonians 5:14—"And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

Galatians 6:1—"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

It is obvious we have a responsibility to help both the one who has fallen and the one vulnerable to Satan's traps and schemes. With that responsibility in mind, I want to suggest wise intervention is needed to help a wounded and captive soldier. We need to put feet to our prayers and follow the instructions of 2 Timothy 2:22-26.

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23] Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24] And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25] Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26] and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will"—2 Timothy 2:22-26.

Let us walk through this passage and highlight the necessary elements for an effective intervention.

Our preparation

To intervene, what must we do? We must be prepared

To flee...

the evil desires of youth (v. 22a). In order to help anyone, we must first see some interior control and wisdom in our experience with temptation. Gal. 6:1—*"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."*

We must first watch ourselves, and then from a realistic picture of our own battles and not out of theory, we will be able to assist others. Previously wounded soldiers make the best rescuers. They are careful!

In addition to fleeing, we need a positive action. We must be prepared

To pursue...

righteousness, faith, love, peace and a pure heart in community (v. 22b). Our first mission is to be fully prepared in our hearts. Did you notice how three of the four qualities we are to pursue are related to our spiritual armor? What does that say? It communicates very clearly we have to have our armor on in our spiritual battle, and as we rescue and help others.

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

Did you notice who we are to be with? "...along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." We need the protection and encouragement of others who can call on the Lord, i.e., those who will pray with us and for us.

To avoid...

(have nothing to do with) foolish and stupid arguments. This passage is very clear about something I see many Christians doing: involving themselves in foolish and stupid arguments. Does this mean we are not to talk with anyone who might disagree with us? Can't we engage in discussion about the faith? That is not what is forbidden. There are times when being faithful to the truth involves "contending" for it. (See Jude 3.) Discussions, defense of the faith, and discussing differences in beliefs are appropriate, given the other guidelines of this passage are followed.

How then can we tell if an argument is foolish and stupid? We can tell by a definition of the words. These arguments are described as foolish (*moras*) and are stupid (*apaideutous*). "Foolish" implies the arguments are the result of an untrained, uneducated mind. "Stupid" implies there is a failure to understand the points at issue. Have you ever been involved in such an exchange with a person in a cult, where the person is not really hearing you? Following a predetermined argument, they are not able to grasp what you are saying.

When I catch myself in this situation, I quit arguing. On the spot, I ask them to pray for me, and then I pray for them. Usually they don't know how to pray, but I love to pray for them. There are three other reasons to avoid foolish and stupid arguments:

1. It produces a quarrel, and that accomplishes nothing. 23b]—"....because you know they produce quarrels."

In other words, it is a pointless, profitless battle. "Wrangling never produces repentance or conversion," writes Homer A. Kent, Jr. in *The Pastoral Epistles*, Moody Press, 1982, pp. 270-271. We might have the right message, but we can turn people off by our manner of argument.

2. The quarrel produces strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction. If we are engaged in a quarrel with a false teacher, a cultist, a rebellious person, or a group of people, then it usually accelerates beyond the initial quarrel to other arenas and to other people.

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

1 Timothy 6:3-5 says—"If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4] he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5] and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Summary: If you have ever been involved in such an argument, you know how it escalates. Pretty soon envy, malicious talk, suspicion and constant friction breaks out. That is why I believe in most cases, debate doesn't help that much. Yes, there are exceptions, but most of the time if we are involved in a quarrel with someone about faith/differences, 1 Timothy 6:3-5 is the norm.

Also, if we are not careful, verse 4 can describe us too: 4] he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions. (See also Proverbs 13:10.)

But beyond the negative by-product of a quarrel, what does 2 Timothy 2:24 tell us is the best reason we should avoid a quarrel?

3. It is commanded the Lord's servant is not to quarrel (v. 24—*And the Lord's servant must not quarrel*).

That should be reason enough for us! A good servant is not to expend good energy on that which, more often than not, bears no fruit or bad fruit—24a. Ask yourself:

- What effect do arguments have on our witness, our energy, and most important of all, our service?
- Unless you are gifted and called to argumentation, what has been your experience in arguing with others about the faith?
- What do 1 Timothy 6:4 and Proverbs 13:10 tell us about the motivation for arguments?

With those answers in mind, what must our presentation consist of? The answer is the

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

opposite of "...*foolish and stupid arguments...quarrels...*"

The rest of 2 Timothy 2:22-26 gives us the ingredients of a wise and effective approach. To begin with, we must take intervention into a fallen or captive soldier's life with the right spirit. We must be prepared:

To be kind to everyone

"...instead, he must be kind to everyone..."

The lifestyle we are to live shows kindness to everyone we meet and have any contact with. This helps us win the right to be heard when we must rescue or intervene. Before we ever talk to anyone, we must be kind to all. Did you catch that? We prepare for intervention in the future by our kindness today.

To be able to teach

Does this mean public exposition of Scripture? We are not talking here about masterful delivery. We are to apply the truth to our lives and, out of that application and success, we will then have something to say; i.e. we will have a lifestyle that gives substance and illustration to our teaching.

Wielding the sword of the Spirit and applying the belt of truth first to our lives enables us to have some experience and keeps us from hypocrisy!

As we share a solution/escape plan with a captive person, there is one sin we must be on guard against, or we may undermine the long-term effect of our action. We must be prepared:

To not be resentful

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

We can't carry into our intervention a sense of anger or resentment at God or the person we are helping. Resentment puts us in a place of arrogance and demeans our ministry and the person we are trying to help. We must always remember that we, too, were rescued when we did not deserve the help!

With that preparation in mind, notice specifically what we are to do in search and rescue missions in the kingdom of God.

Our practice

Our practice is basically centered in one word: instruction. *"Those who oppose him he must gently instruct..."* Before we get to the substance of that teaching, what should we expect when we attempt to help a fallen, wounded, or captured soldier?

The reception will be varied.

Some will gladly receive our instruction and intervention. First Thess. 1:4-10 is a wonderful example of that kind of reception.

Some will see our instruction as an imposition and will reject and oppose our intervention as an intrusion on their space. If we read 2 Cor. 10-11, we see a prime example of those who were not thrilled with their potential rescue. It makes no sense, but some are committed to their sin. They will commonly say, "You are poking your nose where it does not belong."

A third category of responses are those who say, "Who are you?" or, "Leave me alone. I'm too miserable. I can't change"—1 Sam. 31; 2 Cor. 10:10; Gal. 6:1-2.

Beyond the attitude of kindness, another expression of the fruit of the Spirit is needed (see Galatians 5:22-23).

The fruit needed is universal.

We must rescue with "gentleness"—v. 25. Gentleness implies strength under control. It

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

means courteous, considerate, thoughtful and humble. It is not the usual military language! Our message/instruction must be tempered by a gentle spirit and kindness. Again, we need to focus people's attention on the issue of their rescue, not on our negative behavior or spirit.

As the Lord enables us to be gentle, what is our prayer for our instruction?

The hope we have is in God.

v. 25—*"Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth..."*

Here Paul reminds Timothy and us that it is not our words, no matter how well spoken or timely; but the truth God gives that is our hope. This is one of the most important lessons we must learn. Therefore, we do not put hope in our ability.

Now do not misunderstand, we still expend energy in our prayers and our instruction. We are to be obedient, and must be prepared with the right attitudes; but all the pressure is off us. God is the One who brings about the rescue and change in a person's life.

Our prospects

What are they? vv. 25b-26—*"...in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26] and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."*

On the positive side, there are several prospects for the wounded believer/soldier.

The first prospect is that they will come to the knowledge of the truth.

v. 25b—*"...in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge*

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

of the truth..."

Why is the knowledge of the truth so important in spiritual search and rescue operations? At the base of every defeat, failure and capture by the enemy is a lie or a series of lies (see John 8:44). That leads us to the simple, but profound question of the ages: what is the truth? It is biblical content that is correctly and gently taught. Truth is God's Word, not man's opinion or suspicion.

God's truth when spoken is very powerful! That is why we have hope. *"Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth..."*

When we instruct with the truth:

1. It will uncover lies, expose wickedness, because it is like a light. Eph. 5:11-13a—
11] "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12] For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13] But everything exposed by the light becomes visible,..."

2. Truth will also set a person free—John 8:32.

3. Truth will reverse the process of deception. (Rom. 1:25 says that one of the things that happens to those in a downward spiral of sin is *"they exchange the truth for a lie."*)

The opposite, however, is also true. When we speak the truth and it is received, the process can be reversed as truth replaces the lie. Remember to look for the lie when rescuing a captive; and once you find it, replace it with the truth.

How do we know if a person has accepted the truth and has been set free? They repent. *"...in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth..."*

What does repentance look like? Second Corinthians 7:9-11 gives us a very clear description.

"Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—9] yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. 10] Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

brings death. 11] See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter."

The meaning of repentance is to change one's mind and turn from sin (Example: 1 Thess. 1:9). The fruit of repentance is found in other passages as well: Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20; Philemon 18-19; 2 Cor. 7:8-11. In 2 Corinthians, the evidence of repentance is as follows:

- godly sorrow—v. 9
- no regret—v. 10
- earnestness to clear yourself—v. 11
- indignation—v. 11
- alarm—v. 11
- longing (affection)—v. 11
- concern—v. 11
- readiness to see justice done—v. 11
- at every point you proved yourself innocent (made things right)—v. 11

The above gives us a clear picture of what repentance looks like and whether a person wants to be rescued.

Our second positive prospect is that our fellow soldier will come to his/her senses.

v. 26—"*...and that they will come to their senses...*" This is really a result of accepting the truth and true repentance. This phrase is talking about becoming sober again, recovering sobriety, waking up to sobriety, coming out of a stupor. This passage could be used for those recovering from drug and alcohol addiction.

The example of the prodigal son is very helpful.

Luke 15:17-20—"*When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18] I will set out and go back*

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

to my father and say to him: *Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19] I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'* 20] So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

First, there is a confession—"I have sinned..." Notice the next the attitude of repentance—"I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men." Finally, observe the initiative and the direction this took him: "...he got up and went back to his father."

What is the outcome of coming to one's senses? Second Timothy 2:26b describes the final outcome:

Our third positive prospect is that the soldier will escape the trap (snare) of the devil.

"...and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." (They get out of the pig pen and go home.)

This verse highlights some important truths about helping fallen soldiers:

Gentle instruction by the search and rescue team is what helps the fallen and captured to resist the enemy's foothold.

There is not an elaborate scheme of spiritual warfare, binding or loosing of Satan, or any other overt action called for. To listen to some people today, any spiritual rescue, missions or evangelism happens by very extraordinary efforts (e.g., spiritual mapping, getting to the high places, etc.), but that is not what Paul calls Timothy to do. Essentially, it is "get your spiritual armor on and do your part by gently instructing."

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

The real work is done with the hope *"that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26] and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."*

Those are the positive prospects, but what happens if the soldier has been brainwashed to the point that he does not want to escape?

On the negative side, there are two prospects:

First, the sinner will stay in the trap.

His mindset will be so centered on what the sinful nature desires, he will stay in his sin. He may even become more entrenched in his deception, but if so, a downward spiral is ahead. (See Rom. 1:21-32.)

Second, they become so out of fellowship with God and other believers, that they will suffer grievously for their sin.

He may give up with no hope for change or rescue, and believe his pain and suffering is his lot in life.

Conclusion

The need for spiritual search and rescue is illustrated by the story of Scott O'Grady. He was the pilot who was shot down a number of years ago over Bosnia. Most of you know what happened, but for those who missed it, the essence of the story is that after he was shot down, he had to hide for a number of days. He lived under some pretty extraordinary conditions during that time. Finally after several days of being pursued by the Bosnian army, Scott was rescued. Even though he was behind the enemy territory, he was brought out. He was one happy soldier.

I tried to think about some of the folks we know. Many of them are behind enemy territory right now, but maybe they are not fully entrenched; truly wounded; maybe not completely incapacitated yet. Remember how that pilot was barely surviving; not sure he could get out; waiting and looking for someone to come. I believe there are people like that in your life. They really don't want to be where they are, but they need some assistance to escape. And the longer we wait, the possibility is that they will be fully captured and unable to escape. So our study, our preparation, our practice is of an essence. Take

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

advantage of the moment; take the nudging of the Spirit and trust God for some fantastic results!

Appendix

Being fully prepared in our Heart

Notice the interior preparation that must take place in our heart focus on character qualities. v. 22b—"*... and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*"

Much of what happens in our lives has to do with the development of interior character. Many of us say when we go through a hard time, "Why the pain Lord? Why is this happening? Was I doing anything that caused me to go through this? I thought I was doing Okay. Why is all this stuff happening to me?" The answer is, it is not so much what you have done, but what you will become that is the reason for the hard times. In other words, you will be prepared. The difficult circumstances of life help to conform us to the image of Jesus so when we walk into eternity, we will be prepared. The development of character is needed not only so we can grow, but so we can help others who are wounded and captured.

Don't Shoot the Wounded

Chorus:

Don't shoot the wounded, they need us more than ever

They need our love no matter what it is they've done

Sometimes we just condemn them, don't take time to hear their story

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

Don't shoot the wounded someday you might be one

It's easy to love the people who are standing hard and fast
Pressing on to meet that higher calling
But the ones who might be struggling, we tend to judge too harshly
And refuse to try and catch them when they're falling
We put people into boxes and we draw our hard conclusions
And when they do the things we know they should not do
We sometimes write them off as hopeless and we throw them to the dogs
Our compassion and forgiveness sometimes seem in short supply

So I say..... (*chorus*)

We can love them and forgive them when their sin does not exceed our own
For we too have been down bumpy roads before
But when they commit offenses outside the boundaries we have set
We judge them in a word and we turn them out and we close the door
Myself I've been forgiven for so many awful things
I've been cleansed and washed and bathed so many times
That when I see a brother who has fallen from the way
I just can't find the license to convict him of his crimes

So I say..... (*chorus*)

That doesn't mean we turn our heads when we see a brother sin
And pretend that what he's doing is all right
We must help him see his error, we must lead him to repent
Cry with those who cry, but bring their deeds into the light
For it's the sick that need the doctor, and it's the lame that need the crutch
It's the prodigal who needs the loving hand
For a man who's in despair there should be kindness from his friends
'Lest he should forsake the fear of Almighty God and turn away from God and man

Intervention

Written by Bob Stone

So I say.....(*chorus*)

By Chuck Girard c 1982 Sea of Glass Music