

## DISCIPLING THE HARDENED ABUSED OR ESTRANGED

### Part II: Shouldering Self-Sacrifice While Guarding Our Heart

(1 Corinthians 10:31-33; 2 Timothy 3:1-9)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Several believers have recently shared their concerns about discipling hardened abused or estranged people.
- B. We thus give five lessons on discipling such people, with this second lesson on the believer's shouldering self-sacrifice while simultaneously guarding his own heart from abuse from hardened abused or estranged people:

#### II. Shouldering Self-Sacrifice While Guarding Our Heart, 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; 2 Timothy 3:1-9.

- A. The Apostle Paul faced hardened and estranged countrymen, resulting in his being repeatedly rejected and persecuted by them as is reported in passages like Acts 13:45; 14:1-2, 5-6 and 19.
- B. By application, then, Paul exemplified for us a ministry to hardened abused or estranged people (as follows):
  - 1. First, he exhibited a deep, sacrificial love for his estranged and often hardened Hebrew countrymen:
    - a. Paul wrote that he spoke the truth before God, his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Spirit, when he stated that he had relentless sorrow and anguish in his heart for his countrymen, Romans 9:1-2, 3b NIV.
    - b. He even wished that he could be accursed and cut off from Christ, suffering eternal condemnation in hell were it to result in the salvation of his countrymen, Romans 9:3a,b!
  - 2. Accordingly, Paul exerted a self-sacrificial outreach to disciple his countrymen, 1 Corinthians 10:31-33:
    - a. He urged that believers should not cause any group of people, be they Hebrews, Greeks or the Church of God, to stumble spiritually by anything believers might do, but to try to be pleasing to others, not seeking their own good, but the welfare of others that they might be discipled, 1 Corinthians 10:31-33. Paul did not condone compromising with error or sin in order to accomplish such compatibility, but he desired that believers might do whatever was righteous that would build bridges of relationships with others.
    - b. This effort was explained by other directives that the Apostle Paul taught to other believers (as follows):
      - i. He told believers in the Church at Corinth to do whatever they did for God's glory, and that in the context of their diet relative to the divisive issue of eating meat offered to idols, 1 Cor. 10:27-31.
      - ii. Those with weak consciences especially with a Hebrew background who strongly opposed any connection with idols could easily be offended at a believer's eating meat offered to idols although before the Lord such foods purchased in the after-market were acceptable for them (1 Cor. 10:25-26). It only made good sense for a believer to abstain from such meat to avoid creating a wall against a fellow Hebrew or a weak believer who had reservations about eating such meat.
  - 3. However, even Paul himself would withdraw from his countrymen if they became abusive (Acts 14:4-6; 17:4-10, 13-14). Thus, though a believer must love hardened abused or estranged people, he must shrink back from them to protect himself when they become abusive, 2 Timothy 3:1-9:
    - a. Paul predicted that "terrible" times would occur in the latter days, for people would be "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power," 2 Timothy 3:1-5a NIV. They would also be controlling, worming themselves into private homes to gain influence over weak-willed, carnal women, they would always be learning but never able to come to the truth and they would oppose God's credible servants, 2 Timothy 3:6-8.
  - b. The believer is to "turn away . . . avoid" (*apotrepo*, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 101) such people (2 Timothy 3:5b). This verb is in the middle voice (*apotrepou*, *U. B. S. Grk. N. T.*, 1966, p. 735; G. Abbott-Smith, *A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1968, p. 55), so such turning away or avoiding activity is to be done in ways that guard the believer from needless harm from abusive people.
  - c. Therefore, in discipling hardened abused or estranged people, though one must have an unconditional, self-sacrificing love in his heart for them, if such people become abusive toward him, the discipling believer must limit his exposure to them to the extent that he must avoid being needlessly harmed by them.
- 4. The power to apply all these steps comes from relying by faith upon the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16-23.

**Lesson:** *In discipling hardened abused or estranged people, we must rely on the Holy Spirit to exert godly love and self-sacrifice toward such people while also avoiding needless harmful exposure to them if they become abusive.*

**Application:** *May we follow Paul's example in shouldering self-sacrifice while guarding our heart in discipling.*