

December 1, 2011

## You Must Stand Up For Your Convictions!

We cite a man of God you may have never heard of, George Whitefield. An 18th century contemporary of Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield's heart overflowed with loving dedication to his Lord and to God's Word. Determined that others might encounter Jesus as Lord through his preaching, he untiringly answered the call and lead multitudes to repentance. This man of humble beginnings was used by his mighty God to strengthen and further the Great Awakening that so profoundly impacted the society of that day.

As we were writing about George Whitefield we were keenly aware that so many often focus on **what** others did, but fail to examine **why** they did it.

*During our years of ministry we've found that when you take the time to understand the motive of a person you admire, you then find yourself influenced by what inspired them to act so boldly.*

What separates an **opinionated person** and a **person who stands up for their convictions** is this: the latter has such an emotional intensity and heart certainty in what they know to be true that they're willing to pay any cost to represent it—especially in matters of spiritual life. The opinionated we've encountered in Christendom over the years, however, are like shifting sand. While they may believe certain biblical truths to be valid, they hardly ever stand up to defend these before other people.

We've met scores in their own personally customized Christianity who have created a concept of a god they prefer to the One proclaimed in the Bible. But even many who believe what God's Word says are hindered by what others will think if they represent Jesus and His Word as absolute, inviolable truth. Because this culture tolerates everything except the Bible and its identification as the only revelation of God, professed believers who compromise with the world fear the disapproval of those who object. No matter what situation you face, *fear of others* will always be a snare (Proverbs 29:25) — and snares are designed to lure or tempt you to sin against God!

Holding tenaciously to your convictions will always cost you. Yet your willingness to *suffer the consequences* those convictions might trigger verifies how firmly convinced you are about the truth you hold. This is the heart stance of an authentic follower of Jesus, one that will frequently cause others to reject and even persecute you for representing Jesus as the only LORD. Out of loving mercy our Father makes sure you're warned ahead of time about these repercussions:

• ***"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man"***(Luke 6:22).

- **"All men will hate you because of Me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved"** (Mark 13:13).
- **"We must through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God"** (Acts 14:22).
- **"In fact, EVERYONE who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"** (2 Timothy 3:12).

Perhaps you realize that you *don't* have a deep love for Lord Jesus and His Word that encompasses your heart and soul. It may be that you've spent too much time developing *biblical opinions* that indulge your mental reflexes rather than *taking a stand on your convictions* to express the depth of feeling in your heart for the One you purport to love. So many of today's sermons and Bible studies examine Scripture through an academic lens to be talked about and filed away in your brain's recesses. But Christ would have you devour His Word and *apply it* as His very infusion of life — a "love letter" from His Father of *responsive, loving obedience* that impels you to stand up for that Word.

In the coming Dark Days of Chastisement, don't let this sad commentary be said of you: **"Since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, he quickly falls away"** (Matthew 13:21). Responsive and grateful "heart soil" produces deep convictions about both your relationship with Jesus as your Lord and the veracity of His Word. That's the telling evidence that you belong to Him! Why don't you prayerfully seek someone today with whom you can share your convictions, verifying their authenticity in your own life?

**"Remember those earlier days after you had received the light,  
you endured a hard struggle with sufferings"**  
(Hebrews 10:32,CJB).

This nation recently celebrated Thanksgiving. While you may have been caught up in all the feasting and cozy feelings of the day, did you pause to consider how the first Thanksgiving came about? We don't mean the presidential proclamation of 1863. We're referring to the Pilgrims themselves who were wholly committed to their Lord. What do you know about their convictions?

The Pilgrims were a 17th century group of English dissenters known as Separatists who fled persecution under Queen Elizabeth I and her successor, King James I. In her quest to firmly establish the Church of England as THE CHURCH, the queen purposed that all religious groups conform to Anglican ecclesiastical standards. The Separatists, however, were determined to worship God and follow His Word and their conscience, fully committing themselves to base their lives on the Bible. Most of the Separatists were without social or political standing, wielding little influence on those who lived by the world's ways and church establishment rules (see 1 Corinthians 1:26 for a parallel).

Taking a stand for Jesus according to the way His Spirit would work in and through you

will never find popular acceptance, as the Separatists could testify. But this rejection came as no surprise to them, for God's Word had prepared them in the way He intends it to speak to us today:

***"And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through His own blood. Let us, then, go to Him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace He bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come"*** (Hebrews 13:12-14).

The Bible is filled with examples of those who DID take a stand for their God. Our own experience as His followers as well bears witness to this unassailable truth: **When you stand up for Him or His Word, He will stand with you.** You may come to a point in which everyone around you belittles you or forsakes you because of your convictions for Christ. You may feel like the doors of heaven are closed to your prayers because you're seemingly standing alone. But your Father has taken notice of your steadfast trust, and He WILL ACT! Let's revisit that first Thanksgiving. Do you know who *Squanto* is? Do you know how God prepared this Native American *beforehand* in His sovereignty to be able to speak English and to serve through many trials himself as God's agent to help the struggling Pilgrims? To learn more about Squanto, go to <<http://www.workersforjesus.com/f25-14.htm>>.

Again, the remarkable story behind today's Thanksgiving celebration began with a *called-out group of people* whose dedication to their God far outweighed their fear of persecution. They took a stand for Him and His Word, and suffered greatly for it. And because their hearts were so devoted to Him in their stand for His great Name, our Lord delivered them. In light of this conviction that takes a stand for God and His Word, let's consider the upcoming Christmas holiday. You may be tempted to get caught up in warm, sentimental feelings as people get together around a twinkling tree or laden table (never mind the worldly chase after material gratification!). But we encourage you, take the time this year to fully grasp the purpose Jesus left the glory of His Father's side in order to become a man experiencing the weaknesses and temptations common to all of us humans. When you can appreciate His loving, self-sacrificial motives and the depth of your own sinful depravity, that realization may revolutionize how you LIVE FOR HIM, the One Who was born to DIE FOR YOU.

### **Prayerfully consider this:**

The Bible indisputably affirms Jesus Christ as both **Savior** and **Lord** (2 Peter 3:2,18). But too many confine their Christianity to His role as the One Who saves, disregarding the Bible's call to live with Him as Lord of their lives. Jesus accomplished His prophetic purpose and call as *Savior* on the cross two thousand years ago. That work is finished. You appropriate His once-for-all-time redemption by trusting in His shed blood to pay the penalty your sins require. The role of Jesus as your *Lord* is evidenced as you serve Him as His beloved slave and friend. You enact this wondrous relationship by representing *His mind and heart* in actions that reflect *His interests and perspective* each day to those you interact with. The primary interest of our heavenly Father is the salvation of all mankind. And in this light, He calls you to bear His heart burden on behalf of those you care about and people you encounter as you go about each day's

responsibilities.

The Spirit may have been trying to raise you up to take a stand for our Lord Jesus among those you already know or regularly encounter. Yet you've been placated into complacent passivity for so long that you're numb to their need for salvation. We urge you, confess your sin and repent!!! Cry out to our Lord to give you *His heart* for the souls He saw and loved as He hung on the cross! If His concern for the salvation of others is being overridden by your worldly concerns, then be assured you're either ignoring His Spirit or are not even indwelt by Him (see Romans 8:9). His Spirit in you would burden you with the burden of His heart. Please, don't deceive yourself because you attend services and find yourself content and comforted among a throng of others who are equally duped in their self-satisfaction. Conviction, like faith, is ALWAYS seen in the action it produces (James 2:17-26).

Pressing on with loving conviction,  
**Mike & Sue**