

CONSIDER WELL YOUR STEPS!

Joe Slater

“The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps” (Proverbs 14:15).

Sometimes the caller ID on my phone says, “scam likely.” Sad to say, hucksters by the boatload are more than happy to promise you the moon as they steal your identity, drain your bank account, and leave you wondering, “What happened?”

How many Nigerian oil barons need me to help them transfer a few million dollars to the US? Their emails promise that I’ll get a nice fat cut of the loot; all I have to do is give them my personal information (bank account number, routing number, social security number) and they’ll take care of the rest! The tragedy is that of the millions of emails the crooks send, a small handful will fall for the scam. Only when they discover their bank balance is zero do they realize they’ve been conned.

Heartbreaking as it is when gullible people lose their money, losing one’s soul to a spiritual con artist is worse. Jesus warned His disciples to *“beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves”* (Matthew 7:15). We rightly commend the example of the noble Bereans who didn’t blindly believe whatever someone told them. Rather, *“they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11).

Prudence requires us to consider well our steps. Just because someone said something doesn’t make it so – not even if it’s someone we like and have come to trust! Before you believe and act upon what you’ve been told, investigate! Verify! Don’t be a simpleton!

Complacency

Hezekiah was one of the most righteous kings of Judah. He turned to God often in his fight against the enemies of God’s people, and God helped him. Then Hezekiah became very sick. God told him that he was going to die, but Hezekiah again begged for help from God, and God healed him and extended his life for fifteen years.

Perhaps all God’s help and endowment of riches went to Hezekiah’s head. Under false pretenses, the Babylonians came to bring Hezekiah a present and congratulate him for getting well. Hezekiah let down his guard and showed them all his treasure stores. *“There is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them,”* Hezekiah told Isaiah in 2 Kings 20:15. Then Isaiah said, *“All that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left.”*

Hezekiah’s story serves as a warning for us. It is easy for us to be proud of the spiritual blessings we have from God. We are contented because we are children of God. We have salvation and eternal life. Maybe we even boast of our knowledge of God’s word. Maybe we sit back and say, “I am a good Christian, and I’ve done lots for God.” We become complacent.

Our adversary, the devil, walks about and seeks whom he may devour. Has he lured us into a state of comfort and satisfaction in our own salvation? Have we forgotten that we are ambassadors of Christ, sent to lead others unto God? May we put on the whole armor of God and join His army to fight Satan. Let us give diligence lest we fall into negligence and disobedience in our duty to save the lost.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)

I Am Determined

An epitaph from an old gravestone reads: “What I gave, I have; what I spent, I had; what I kept, I lost.”

When the apostle Paul was on his second missionary journey, he came to Troas and, while there, had a vision during the night of a man from Macedonia who stood and pleaded with him: *“Come over to Macedonia and help us”* (Acts 16:9). Paul immediately went to Macedonia and came to Philippi, where he converted Lydia, her household, and the Philippian jailer and his family. In his efforts to preach the gospel, he was beaten with rods and thrown into the inner prison.

Later, when he wrote to the church in Philippi, he tried to impress on them how important it is for Christ to be the number one choice in their lives. He said, *“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ”* (Philippians 3:7-8).

Paul’s attitude toward this life was one of sacrifice and service, and in this he rejoiced. He said, *“Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all”* (Philippians 1:17). He told the Corinthians, *“For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* (2 Corinthians 2:2). Paul again wrote to Timothy: *“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day”* (2 Timothy 1:12).

Jesus said, *“For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Matthew 16:26).

--Cecil Burch (Angel Fire, NM) via *Old Paths*