

Too Soft, Too Hard?

by Bob Jennings

The sermon explores the critical balance between kindness and severity in Christian living and correction.

Topics: "Christian Living", "Righteous Relationships"

Description

Bob Jennings preaches about the importance of finding the balance between being too soft and too hard in our interactions with others, drawing examples from biblical figures like Ahab, David, and Paul. He emphasizes the need to combine kindness and truth, as shown in Proverbs 3:3, to effectively navigate relationships and situations without compromising on righteousness. By examining the actions of various characters in the Bible, he highlights the consequences of being excessively lenient or harsh, urging listeners to follow the perfectly balanced example set by Jesus in his approach to correction and compassion.

Transcript

Proverbs 3:3 Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck...

Romans 11:22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God...

Too Soft

Ahab was too soft, too kind. He let Ben-Hadad, the Aramean king, go, and it cost him - it cost him "his life" by a random Aramean arrow, 1Kg. 22.34.

1Kings 20.42 Thus says the Lord, 'Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.

No wonder this prophetic word sent him home "sullen and vexed." He was too soft! Have you ever felt it?

David was too soft on his son, and it cost him, 1Kg. 1.6. Eli was too soft on his sons, and it cost him, 1Sam. 2.23, 3.13. Samuel was too soft on his sons - he should not have made them judges - and everyone knew it, 1Sam. 8.1,5. Saul was too soft on the Amalekites, and it cost him, 1Sam. 15.9. Jether was too soft, to his perpetual embarrassment, Judges 8.20. The church at Thyatira "tolerated the woman," and it cost them - "great tribulation, I will kill", Rev. 2.20.

Paul could be rough. He called some believers "foolish", Gal. 3.1. He rebuked a co-worker "in the presence of all", Gal. 2.14. He expected such to be the ministry of fear, 1Tim. 5.20. He called Titus to "severely reprove" the empty talkers, Tit. 1.13. He blinded the false preacher, Acts 13.11. He delivered some to the devil, 1Tim. 1.20, and anticipated the offender's body would be destroyed, 1Cor. 5.5. Peter spoke and dropped a husband and wife, Acts 5. John planned to expose Diotrephes, 3Jn. 10. John the Baptist and Elisha were sharp with kings, Mk. 6.18, 2Kg. 3.14. Jael was good with the hammer and tent peg, Jdg. 4.21. And Phinehas was fierce with God's jealousy, Num. 25.11.

A curse is pronounced on those who "restrain their sword from blood", Jer 48.10. And so, the land is cursed with preachers who do that - accommodation, moderation, toleration, "peace, peace, when there is no peace", Jer. 6.14. Like Ahab, they err being too "merciful", 1Kg. 20.31. They are salt with no savor. It's no wonder then that our society can't call Islam evil. The devil specializes in blurring the lines.

Too Hard

On the other hand, some are too hard. A subsequent king to Ahab was tempted to be too hard on the Arameans.

2Kg. 6.21,22 Then the king of Israel when he saw them, said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" He answered, "You shall not kill them."

James and John were too hard, wanting to call down fire on the unreceptive, Luke 9.55. Moses was too hard, giving an unrighteous righteous rebuke, Num. 20.10. Saul was too hard, speaking so cruelly to his son, 1Sam. 20.30. Simeon and Levi were too hard, taking such revenge for their sister, Gen. 34. It is easy to do, "not knowing what kind of spirit we are of." And it can cost - it is the ministry of death.

The Balance

There is a time to "severely reprove", Tit. 1.13, and there is a time to "gently correct", 2Tim. 2.25. Paul could bring a "rod", 1Cor. 4.21, or he could be as gentle and as tender as a nursing mother, 1Th. 2.7. We appreciate the perfectly balanced example of the Lord Jesus. He had the perfectly balanced necklace of both kindness and truth, Pro. 3.3.

On the one hand, the Lord Jesus was hard. Passing by the compliments, He puts His finger on the sore spot - as with the leader (you must be born again), the woman at the well (go call your husband), the rich young ruler (one thing you lack), and the Jewish false professors (you are of your father, the devil). He did some name-calling, Lk. 13.32, Mat. 23.33. He got physical, Mat. 21.12.

On the other hand, the Lord Jesus was extremely soft - the woman caught in adultery, Peter with his denials, and the many grievous disappointments from the disciples. He "gently leads" His sheep, Isa. 40.11. He has compassion on the ignorant and those who are out of the way, Heb. 5.2. He passes over our rebellious acts and delights in unchanging love, Mic. 7.18. Behold then, the kindness and the severity of our Lord, Rom. 11.22.

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