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Choosing Your Battles

Twelve years ago, after our daughter was born, one of my coworkers shared some very sage advice on childrearing. This was a woman who had two daughters, had survived an extremely abusive relationship with her husband and had rescued one of her daughters from drug addiction. She was very wise and we had a number of conversations about religion, life and everything else. She told me one day to remember that as my daughter grew that I had to learn to pick my battles. We had a long conversation about that subject and over the years have found it to be very true. There are some issues that are worth arguing while others are not worth the time and effort. This principle holds true for spiritual things as well and wonder if this is not the reason why some shy away from obeying the truth and why we as Christians sometimes become weak and fail to do what is right. Becoming a Christian involves sorting our lives out and changing those things that are not in harmony with God's will. Change is never easy and much hard work is involved in order to be pleasing to the Lord. Paul writes of the conflict that takes place within us. In his letter to the Galatians Paul states, ***“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”*** (Gal 5.17). We are physical beings and depending on our life situation becoming a Christian presents various challenges as we travel toward the home that we seek with God and Christ. We are subject to the desires and weaknesses of a body that is vulnerable to many things. Peter tells us that we have a powerful enemy that walks about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5.8). Peter goes on to tell us, ***“Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”*** (1 Pet 5.9). James also gives us a warning and offers hope, stating, ***“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*** (Jas 4.7). Resistance is sometimes hard. Our enemy knows our weaknesses and will prey on each and every opportunity to cause us to stumble. Some find that it is easier to compromise and are drawn to doctrines that provide an eas-

ier way out. In order to be strong we must work diligently to strengthen ourselves and have in our possession the tools necessary to overcome the hurdles that are thrown in our path. We begin with a foundation in God's word and strive to build on the knowledge we gain from it. But our strength is not enough at times and we must rely on God to bless us so that we will be successful in resisting the wiles of the evil one. Inner reflection is necessary to evaluate ourselves, not through our own eyes, or the perceptions of the world, but in light of what God has revealed that he wants us to be. Some accept weakness, human frailty and failings as part of being human and do not work to overcome them. As humans it is easier to imagine that God just overlooks some things and allows us to continue on without giving due reverence to our holy calling. The writer of Hebrews warns us about this type of attitude and states, ***“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”*** (Heb 12.4). Paul warned the Romans about the dangers of being lax in our service to God. ***“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”*** (Rom 11.22). The idea that God is so loving that he will excuse some things is an attitude that will cause us to be rejected if we are not mindful of what is at stake. ***“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”*** (2 Cor 5.11). God is indeed loving and desires that we all obey him in order that he can save us. We must work diligently to be what the Lord wishes for us to become so that we can live with him throughout eternity.