



November 18, 2007

## *Loose Ends*

Some time ago I was reading information on a training session on how to deal with stress. The leader of the session stated in the brochure that stress was the result of things that are not done, not things that we are involved in. I am paraphrasing the statement to some degree but the idea stuck with me for a while. At first I questioned the idea but as time went on I saw how much of what we find stressful is due to the fact that we feel inadequate when faced with what needs to be done and not what we are able to do. I am still not sure that this accounts for all stress but it does seem to fit a great many situations in which we find ourselves. In spiritual things, as well as life in general, it may be the loose ends that have not been taken care of that cause anxiety. The Bible has much to say about this. Sometimes we may put off doing what we know we should do and eventually this becomes a problem. Solomon stated, ***“He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.”*** (Eccl 11.4). We may find ourselves putting off doing something if there is even a hint of adversity. Just as one may look at the sky and put off needed work out of concern for what the weather might do, we may find ourselves shrinking from doing that which God would have us accomplish if there is even a chance of rejection. How many missed opportunities to teach others are due to our fear of the reaction we might encounter. This is one way that we confess Christ before men. Jesus told his disciples, ***“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”*** (Matt 10.32-33) We do not like the idea of being rejected by Christ but when we fail to teach or to stand for what we know to be right this will be the result. At other times we may fail to do something because we do not have the proper sense of responsibility that we need to cultivate. Solomon states, ***“As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.”*** (Prov 26.14). ). If we do not use the talents that we have, and develop them, we become spiritually lazy and find more reasons not to do that which we know should be done, or that we could do. A skewed sense of priorities will lead us to spiritual ruin if we do not exercise the knowledge that we have. The writer of Hebrews condemns this when he states, ***“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you***

***again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.”*** (Heb 5.12). Peter states, ***“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”*** (1 Pet 2.2). Paul told Timothy, ***“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”*** (1 Tim 4.13). ***“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.”*** (1 Tim 4.15). Another source of spiritual stress is to fail to do that which we have the opportunity to take care of at the appropriate time. Paul writes, ***“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”*** (2 Cor 6.2). Many problems become such simply because we do not deal with a situation before it is out of hand. In this sense, that which has not been done becomes the source of greater conflict and in an extreme form disrupts our fellowship with other Christians and those of the world. Problems that many have, and that we may experience, often come from not dealing with things when they need to be addressed. These things may build up over time causing concern and further avoidance of situations that need to be dealt with. Christians in the first century were active in their teaching, fellowship and service to God. We need to follow their example as well as that of Christ while we have the time and opportunity. Regret is the result of knowing that we have not taken care of business in spiritual things and will eventually lead us to become apathetic and indifferent. Finally we need to realize that we will have the ability to do what we can when it needs to be done if we rely on God, study his word and put it to use. The writer of Hebrews states, ***“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”*** (Heb 13.5-6).

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