

## Blindsided

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When I was seventeen years old, I was strong and full of energy. I used to try different feats of strength on the docks and in the warehouse at my family's food business. It was sort of like my private World's Strongest Man contest. I would lift several cases of something at once or pull a partially loaded pallet of something across the dock without a forklift. I think it was mostly for my own benefit. I didn't usually care if there was much of an audience; I just liked to know I could do it. I really felt pretty impenetrable. "Mr. Invincible" meet Careless. One day I was just inside the warehouse standing on top of a whole pallet of something. This would have meant that I was four or five feet in the air. When I was through with whatever I was doing, without any thought, I leapt off the edge, and a split second later Hercules was tamed. Both balls of my feet landed on the front platform edge of a two-wheeled dolly. The metal was slightly skewed, bringing the edge just slightly off the floor. The top of the metal back of the two-wheeler was "conveniently" the same height as my nose when I landed with my knees partially bent to absorb the jump. The top of the handle whipped into my nose so fast I didn't even know what hit me until after I had stumbled back and turned around to see it. My nose made an eerie "pop" several seconds after I landed and then blood was everywhere. I thought there was a good chance that I had inadvertently done that martial arts move where you kill your opposition by knocking their septum back into their brain. Even during the time in my life that I was physically the strongest, I could be physically hurt. I have lost much of that physical strength and now am more careful with what I attempt. I fear though that many of us might be tempted to feel that our faith is immune to damage from life's circumstances. Recently I learned of another situation in the life

of a “Christian pillar” that reminds me of the harsh reality of a very opposite truth. No man is safe. In fact, the safer we think we are, the more vulnerable we are to our blind side. 1

Corinthians 10:12 warns, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” Are you and I ready to be blindsided? Many things in this world threaten to steal our faith. Let’s understand that fact and get ready together for these challenges.

What if we are taunted by someone for the “absurdity” and “naivete” of our faith in God? What if that someone is in a position of power over us? Do we understand, like David in 1 Samuel 17: 26, that the battle is not a personal one that we are called to fight alone? We are encountering the very fight we read about in Ephesians 6:12. David’s response to the challenge of Goliath is explained in 1 Samuel 17: 37. “The Lord will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine,” he said. Verses 34-37 tell us why David was prepared with this response of power. He had trusted in God to save him all along. It was never only him entering a righteous battle. It was he and God. David told Goliath as much in verse 45. Verse 50 confirms the soundness of a battle-tested faith, “So David prevailed over the Philistine....” We shouldn’t shrink in timidity when the giants of this world tell us our God does not exist.

What if the very laws of the land we live in are changed contradictory to the direction in the Word of God? In Daniel 6, Daniel knew that a law had been passed banning any petitions to any god or man other than King Darius. He went home and prayed with his windows open anyway. Couldn’t Daniel have just been a little more discreet for 30 days? Faith in God does not change because the laws of man do. Who, after all, is the King of our lives? Verse 10 tells us of Daniel’s preparation for this day. It was his custom “since early days” to pray and give thanks to God. We know of another circumstance in Daniel 1 where Daniel and his friends chose not to follow the King’s decree and eat of his delicacies. He was not beholden to the king for his

delicacies or anything else. His sustenance came from God and he knew it. **Is it possible that the ease of sitting at “the king’s table” in our nation has caused us to refrain from doing anything that might threaten that ease?** That is not the pattern for men of faith in God’s Word. The laws of our King should reign in our lives regardless of the laws passed around us. Daniel’s reaction was in full accord with the pattern of his life. Could we confidently answer in the words of Daniel in verse 22 about our lives? Are we innocent before our King by not selling our faith for the comforts of this life?

What if someone or some things are taken from us before we are ready for them to go? In Job 1 we read that Job lost his property, servants, and children and found out about it all in a few moments. In verse 21, Job worshipped and said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Do you know many people that have lost their jobs currently? Have you known of those who have lost their homes in catastrophic weather events or fire? Do you know those that have lost young family members to death? Of course, we all do. Is it wise or even lucid thinking to pretend we don’t have to prepare for these things? Well, how can you prepare might be the question on our minds. Job 1:5 describes the regular effort Job put into preparing his family for judgment by offering sacrifices on their behalf as was appropriate in the patriarchal age. Verse 1 tells us he was blameless, upright, feared God, and shunned evil. That was while everything was going okay in his life. Oh, how that preparation showed when the worst Satan could bring was thrust on his life! Even his wife told him to “curse God and die.” Isn’t it too much to ask for a person to lose his possessions and immediately worship God? Isn’t it too much to worship after losing your family? Shouldn’t any human be expected to cave in when even his wife turns on him and God? What if he loses his own health? What if all these happened to the same man?

Surely, this is more than he can bear. Job had tremendous earthly wealth and family as we read in Job 1:2, 3. We find out by his reaction to the devastation that his treasure was not here, though. Where is our treasure? My friend has recently challenged others and me with the question: “If your family was in Heaven and you inherited the crown, mansion, and streets of gold, would you be happy if Jesus wasn’t there?” The real question is do we love God or do we just love His stuff? Job loved God. Do we?

We are not promised a life sheltered from pain, disease, or loss. Matthew 10:34-39 might be difficult for us because we just don’t want to believe the truth. We want so badly for our lives to be comfortable that we are even willing to dodge or alter Scripture to make it possible. Paul wrote about running to win in 1 Corinthians 9:24. That prize is not given indiscriminately. It is only bestowed on those willing to bring their bodies into subjection and train them. 1 Corinthians 10:13 promises that our experiences, however shocking and traumatic, are common to man. It goes on to comfort us by saying that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. There will be a way of escape to enable us to bear it. This world promises to blindside us. The only answer lies in the invitation of our Savior who says, “Come to Me...” (Matthew 11:28, 29).