STAND FAST OR COMPROMISE

Dub McClish

The whole point of a soldier's being well-armed is not for the parade ground, the reviewing stand, or mock maneuvers, but for the field of combat. The reason we are to "take up the whole armor of God" is that we "may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:13). *The evil day* is best understood as the day of combat, trial, temptation, persecution, or opposition. The real spiritual battles are the frequent, often daily, encounters the Christian soldier faces as he takes up the cross **daily** to follow his Commander-in-chief (Luke 9:23). In the daily fray is where the armaments and weapons supplied by the Lord are required. Each of us will stand or fall spiritually for the most part, not in one great, pitched battle, but in the daily skirmishes that add up to the prolonged warfare.

We have a responsibility to stand and fight. Rather than cowering, compromising, or running from the foe, we are to "resist the devil: and he will run from us" (Jam. 4:7). We are not to "give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27) by surrendering or abandoning the Truth. We are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). We, like Paul, must be "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phi. 1:16). Soldiers of Christ are obligated to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). The worthy spiritual warrior must be "stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord…" (1 Cor. 15:58). We are ordered to withstand the devil without compromise in our faith (1 Pet. 5:8–9).

When one staunchly stands for the Truth while those about him are retreating, compromising, and even deserting the blood-stained banner of the heavenly kingdom, he will encounter suffering. The Satan-dominated **world** will see that the faithful soldier pays a price for his dedication. Likewise, the **brethren** whose position of compromise and desertion is

exposed by the bold and resolute soldier will turn their "guns" on him. Among the many perils Paul had to contend with were “perils among false brethren” (2 Cor. 11:26).

The temptation to compromise Truth and righteousness in order to avoid financial loss or to favor our kindred, close associates, or those in places of prestige and power in the kingdom is very strong. Some have found one or more of these temptations irresistible. We have seen men who once taught the Truth on marriage, divorce, and remarriage suddenly “discover” a “loophole” concerning Matthew 19:9 when a son or daughter became involved in an unscriptural divorce and remarriage. We have known of preachers who at one time boldly preached the Truth on such moral evils as dancing, drinking, and immodest apparel, suddenly become mute, deciding these were not important “issues” when worldly brethren threatened their employment. We have known elderships that have sought to muzzle preachers on certain subjects for fear of losing brother and sister “Moneybags” whose money they were counting on to help pay for the church building. We have seen school administrators betray faithful brethren and loyal friends in order to placate certain contributors to their schools.

We are also aware of brethren who at one time faithfully exposed and opposed various errors in doctrine and practice (and blushed not to name their perpetrators), but who abruptly ceased doing so. These not only grew silent concerning certain errors (e.g., elder reaffirmation/reconfirmation), but they began pronouncing said error harmless and endorsing and embracing its principal perpetrator. They have gone so far as to say now of the error they once opposed, “It is not worth dividing the church over.” (By this statement they imply that they still consider it to be error, but just not “serious” error. They are also implying that those who **do** oppose it **are** guilty of dividing the church.) Instead of continuing to confront

this error and its chief advocate in the church (who continues boldly to say, “I would do it again”), several brethren have compromised not only their former convictions, but the Truth of God’s Word. If the elder r/r practice constituted doctrinal and practical error from April 1990 until early 2005, what caused it no longer to be error after that time? If that doctrine and practice no longer constituted error after the spring of 2005, what rendered it unauthorized before that time?

The case of compromise described above involves the desire of certain brethren to support an institution so much that they are willing to call “darkness” *light* and “good” *evil.* They have proved themselves unwilling to withstand the director of the institution in his error by calling on him to repent. Those who have thus compromised have depicted those of us who have refused to compromise on this issue as “radicals,” “unbalanced,” “toxic,” “a negative faction,” “neo-antis” who are afflicted with a “devil disease,” and similar complimentary terms. They have accused us of causing “rupture in the fellowship of the church.”

Contrary to the behavior of all such compromisers, Paul perfectly exemplified the trait of determined faithfulness, yea, heroism, even when personal and public confrontation were required. When he addressed those who compromised with error in the Galatian churches, he pointed out that he sought not the favor of men, but of God, and that were he seeking to please men he could not be Jesus’ servant (1:10). He made it plain that his convictions in and loyalty to the Truth were not grounded in any men, not even in the other apostles (1:11–19). Paul was not swayed in his convictions by the behavior or reputations of others when those others strayed from the Truth. In describing his part in the great Jerusalem discussion over the binding of circumcision, he told of his utterly uncompromising attitude on that

occasion. After labeling the errorists as “false brethren privily brought in” (2:9), he then stated of them:

> To whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man’s person)--they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me (vv. 5–6).

Note the noble example of Paul: He gave no place to the grievous error of the Judaizers because the Gospel Truth and the destiny of souls were at stake. He was not swayed by those in lofty positions “who were reputed to be somewhat,” not practicing respect of persons, even as God refuses to do. Paul cared not about protecting or preserving anyone who was in error, regardless of his “connections,” academic qualifications, abilities, or the value of the organization he might direct. The Truth was at stake, and he refused to compromise it, regardless of the friends or associates he might lose in the process.

Paul was so completely loyal to the Lord and His Word that he would not even allow a fellow-apostle to compromise the Truth without opposing him:

> But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation (2:11–13).

We have seen in a year’s span a lamentable tapestry of compromise woven by and among some once-stalwart brethren. Instead of “resisting him to the face, because he stood condemned,” a few who are “reputed to somewhat” have given their imprimatur to a documented false teacher in order to support the institution he directs. As Peter did till Paul

confronted him, these compromising few have carried away a large number of brethren in a long parade of compromising dissimulation behind them. Had these “reputed-to-be-somewhat” brethren withstood the false teacher after the manner of Paul (as some of us have continued to do), our combined efforts might have brought about his repentance. Instead, because of the compromisers, the false teacher feels secure and comfortable in his error, once-congenial brethren have become estranged, and the kingdom suffers.

CONCLUSION

Compromise on matters of obligatory Truth is not an option for faithful soldiers of Christ. It represents spiritual treason and sedition. There is no place for it in the kingdom of Christ, regardless of the cost of remaining steadfast. Paul encouraged Timothy (and us) from his prison cell as he was facing death: "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3). Such soldiers have the heartening promise of the Lord:

> Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you (Mat. 5:11–12).