

PRESSURE TO COMPROMISE AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO

A man had his wife admitted in the hospital. For a period of six months, he had been paying the medical bills. He exhausted all his resources. The time came for her to be discharged but the pending medical bill was overwhelming. He also had a son that had been sent home from school for lack of school fees. As if that wasn't enough, he had not paid the rent for two months. His landlord had given him a notice and was threatening him with eviction. He had had a financial dive into the deep.

Despite all this, the man held his integrity and remained faithful at the bank where he was working and handling lots of money—the very thing he was in a dire need of. His corrupt boss knew his problem and thought that he could get the man to compromise. The boss had been approaching him in the past but this man would not accept to be compromised. This time the boss thought that he would get him. He told the man that he could take some money home if they conspired and signed some fraudulent papers. The man refused. He did not only have the *pressure* both from the boss and the circumstances but also had the *opportunity*.

Suppose the man accepted to be fraudulent? Well, we may say, 'that would be an outright forgery—stealing'! But we need to bring ourselves to that point and see if we may not compromise. I am saying this not because I would endorse a fraudulent act under whatever circumstances. Rather, I am saying it because there are many who condemn others but when put in the same or even less pressurising circumstances, they would compromise. But this is not to discourage calling sin "sin". It is, however, meant to make us aware that there are pressures out there that we need to brace ourselves to withstand and not just quick to dismiss issues without putting ourselves in the same situation. I know of cases about people who condemn things that they themselves commit. The Bible warns against such behaviour:

...if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

—Romans 2:18-24.

One way of putting ourselves in the position of others is to *share* with people who are struggling. It is important that I emphasise that sometimes brethren over-spiritualise things until it is no longer spiritual. Sometimes, material sharing is more spiritual than sharing Godspeed.

Let us consider another example that looks "mild" and doesn't involve signing of fake papers. A man had all the financial pressures you can imagine—far much worse than the one described above. He asked God and believed Him for a miracle. He was a poor man who was a casual worker at the port. His earnings were far much less than what was reasonable to survive on. He was well educated but for years had failed to get a job in line with his education a result of which he picked on a low-paying casual work.

One day, as he was walking from work in the afternoon, a courier van passed him along the way. He guessed right. The van was carrying money from one of the multi-billion companies in town. Armed thieves ambushed the van hardly a kilometre away. They stopped the van and robbed it. It happened that one of the people in the van was quick enough to

signal the police about the trouble. Before the thieves could steer clear from the place, the police arrived and engaged the thieves in a fire exchange. The man, fearing to fall a victim of the bullets and that he might himself be mistaken for one of the thieves, bolted into the nearby bush.

In the scuffle, an escaping thief dropped a “manageable” safe of money just falling short of hitting his head where he was hiding. In an attempt to escape with at least some money, the thief had already shot at the safe and it was as good as opened. The police, in hot pursuit and not following directly behind the thief, missed the safe. The man was grateful in his heart. His gratitude, however, was not that the police didn’t see the money, it was that they didn’t see him. He could have easily been mistaken for a thief and probably been shot dead.

Frozen in fear, the man was still lying there with the money next to him thirty minutes later. He was so scared he couldn’t even crawl away from the money lest his movement attract the attention of the police that, according to him, must have been in the vicinity.

He finally went away leaving the money still lying where it had been dropped, but, of course, not without a surge of temptation to pull out some bills enough to sort himself out of his present financial difficulties.

The following day it was reported in the papers that the thieves escaped but part of the money was recovered. The man was sure it was the money that had been dropped near him.

After four days he decided to go back and confirm. He was completely not counting on getting the money still lying there after that long. He was sure that either the thieves must have come back for the money or it must have been the money the police recovered. Meanwhile, he was struggling to find the meaning of the money coming so close to him at a time when he had asked God for a financial miracle. Did he let go of a God-given chance to get out of financial problem?

As he was walking back to check, he kind of wondered: ‘Suppose I get the money still lying there, wouldn’t it be proof enough that God meant the money to be mine?’ He never bothered to entertain this thought further since there was no way the money could still be lying there.

Sure enough, another round of temptation! The money was still there. Out of curiosity, he counted the money. It was enough to cancel his poverty for good. He began getting “attached” to the money. It happened that the van had had two safes, the one that was recovered and the one that was still lying in the bush. He wondered why this money was not recovered. Why didn’t the police use sniffer dogs to get the money? Why didn’t the thieves come back to search for the money? Could all this mean that God had answered his prayer? Was losing that money going to be a big blow to the company? No! The company was stable financially, it would surely not stop operating leave alone collapsing.

So, what did he do? For the second time, he left the money there and went home still struggling with his *financial pressure* against the *financial opportunity*. Surely he had let go an answered prayer, or so he kept on wondering.

The very weapon that Goliath of Gath intended to use for cutting David’s body, God enabled David to use to cut Goliath’s head.

No! This can’t be an answered prayer; not by directly taking the money. He remembered Matthew 4 where the devil tempted the Lord. Jesus was tempted when He was vulnerable. The enemy had wanted to take advantage of His vulnerability. Jesus refused to give in to His

need. The man went quickly to the company that lost the money. He got an opportunity to talk to the Managing Director. He didn't trust to go to the police direct. He feared that they might harass him and probably mistake him for one of the thieves who would be trying to clear himself out. They went to the police station together with the MD, and from there, he took them to the place where the money was dropped.

You may guess that this man was rewarded immediately. You guess wrong! He wasn't given a dime except a verbal, "Thank you!"

It was until a year and a half later. For reasons not explained regarding the stretch of time, the man was later employed by the company. He was put on an administrative portfolio and the job was in line with his education. He got a salary that, according to him, was originally not within his wildest dreams. But for the one and a half years, his financial woes continued to bite even deeper. He asked God for grace and a clear heart so that he didn't regret for having returned the money that could have turned him into a millionaire overnight. His integrity paid off. Lesson: integrity and patience pays—however long it takes.

The one and a half year was surely a stretch of a test and it counts especially if one doesn't regret for having done the right thing seeing that no reward was forthcoming. After a couple of weeks, he was convinced that there was not going to be any reward. He, however, never regretted. The core of the test and that which has an ultimate worth is where we do the right thing as we know best and yet fail to get a reward for it.

Suppose, instead of an appreciation, the man was mistaken to have been one of the thieves? There was a possibility that he could have been arrested and charged that he must have been a robber but had just changed his mind. How could he explain the anomaly of the thieves not coming back for the money all those days? Doing good is one thing, suffering for it is another—can we be willing to take it? The Bible exhorts us to be willing to suffer for doing good and to count it all joy when we suffer for it (Jam. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-19).

Let us look at another example of a mean test. In chapter 5, I talked about a man of God who was married to a frigid woman. He maintained that it was custom for his wife to deprive him at will. He couldn't remember a single day after those years of marriage to have had a meaningful fulfilment in their sexual life. The man was seriously "starved".

One night, as usual, the wife refused to yield to his plea for "what was due". At day break, the man woke up, depressed, feeling betrayed and rejected. When he went to his place of work that morning, he got into a "problem". A colleague couldn't hide any longer that she had fallen in love with him. He, nevertheless, wondered why the lady was after him yet, she was well aware that he was not only married but that he was also saved. The man never hid these two important facts about his life at his place of work.

She held his hand and with a femininely seducing gaze told him, "You are a handsome man!" From the gesture and the way the lady held his hand, he "picked the signals". Despite this, he decided to be a "gentleman". As a way of showing that he wasn't jumping to any conclusions nor quickly interpreting the gesture to be of any ulterior motive, he returned the compliment: "You are a beautiful woman too!" The lady didn't let go of his hand but continued looking intently into his eyes, waiting for the message to sink even deeper.

The man became nervous because his senses had just begun to register that this was a woman—a beautiful woman at that—and that the lady was communicating "something". The lady let go his hand and continued with her work but it was after she made sure that her signals had been picked. The feminine gimmicks she unleashed on him were powerful enough. As instinct would have any "normal" man betrayed regarding the non-verbal romantic gestures from the opposite sex, the man must have "confirmed" that he actually "understood" what the lady was "talking about". She would wait for the effect of the encounter to sink. Normally, a man would make a follow-up.

Many people may not steal, for example, not because “they are not thieves” but because they have never had either an opportunity or a significant pressure to do so, or both.

He didn't. And the lady was not letting go. On another occasion, she held his hand and told him frankly, “There is no reason to pretend. You know that I have what you need, so what are you going to do about it?” she asked. The man was not expecting that she would be so blunt. He wasn't prepared for this and for a moment or two, he wondered what would be the right answer in this regard. In fact, he was confused but was resolved in his heart not to do what the lady was asking. He actually needed what the lady was offering but it wasn't right. She wanted to give him what wasn't his.

The man saw however the reality of salvation and the enemy's determination to draw believers back into his kingdom. This man was once weak in this area. During that time, no woman ever approached him so directly. He kept on wondering how the lady knew that he actually “needed” what she was willing to provide. Though his wife, for mysterious reasons, had categorically disgraced, rejected and betrayed him, and despite the raw deprivation, he knew that there was no godly reason under heaven to become unfaithful. He wasn't going to accept the offer. In his heart, he, of course, accepted the fact that he actually needed love and intimacy with a woman. Nevertheless, if it wasn't going to be his wife, then however painful it was going to be, he would go through life without the wonderful gift of a woman's love and intimacy.

The man was sure that he had not given the lady a betraying look to hint to her that he needed “something” from her. “It was the enemy,” he asserted. The enemy was just manipulating things to fix him. He once tried to manipulate Christ at His most vulnerable time.

The scenario above would remain a temptation to any normal man—whether starving or not. It is also an opportunity to entertain sin. Now the pressure doubles when a man is equally “hungry”—an opportunity and a pressure joining forces together. If you are a man in that situation, what would you do? Would you sin and blame it on your wife or would you hold your integrity?

We all know the story of Adam and Eva (Gen. 3). From this story we know that it doesn't pardon sin to blame it on someone else however true it is that the person enticed you into it. The Bible talks about the old Adam that sinned at the first opportunity and blamed it on his partner, but the New Adam (Jesus) refused to yield when the devil gave Him an opportunity and also put Him under pressure to do so (Matt. 4:3-4). He was not going to yield and blame it on hunger and the devil who tempted Him at a vulnerable moment.

We are the followers of the Second Adam. He clearly demonstrated that we don't give in to temptation even if we seem to have “a good” reason to do so. Actually, there is no justified reason to sin. Virtue that counts is resisting both the opportunity and pressure to sin.

*An Excerpt from:
Chapter 17 of “VIRTUE THAT COUNTS: Pursuing That
Which Touches the Heart of God”
©2003 (Revised 2007).*