

Call to Obedience #237
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Time outs are times when the devil sows his seeds of discouragement into our hearts.

No Time Out
By Reimar Schultze

"Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth" (John 8:59-9:1).

Do you ever take time out from serving God, from witnessing, from prayer and prayer meeting, from church attendance, from being kind and thoughtful to others, from servanthood, because someone falsely accused you of doing something, and he is about to cast stones at you? Do you ever take time out to sulk, to nourish your hurt feelings, to feel sorry for yourself, or to let anger, bitterness, disappointment and resentment accumulate in your soul when things don't go your way? Have you ever decided to quit teaching Sunday school, or do youth work, or pastor, or serve on the board, simply because several people have complained to you about how you handle things? Oh, how many children of God have, under some unpleasant provocation, taken time out from the service of the Lord for hours, days, months or years, or quit altogether?

Dear ones, how much provocation, how much abuse, how much complaining and criticism can you as a Christian handle before you take time out in discouragement and quit the very work that God gave you to do?

Why do we take time out from the service of the Lord when God does not give us a "time out permit"? Why do we quit our divine assignment when the going gets rough even though God has never given us a license to abandon the course?

Would you run your fingers through the pages of the Bible and tell me how many times God has ever given a servant of his a "time out permit" or a "license to quit"? Yet, the highway of God's divine road of servanthood is littered with untold numbers of spiritual wrecks lying in the ditches because they wrote their own tickets to take time out, or to quit.

Oh, may God have mercy on us, and may we look to Jesus and finish the work he has given us to do, without missing a single step by nourishing hurts and disappointments.

Is it not a marvel that Jesus, the most abused, criticized, mistreated, unappreciated man who ever lived on earth, never took time out, and never quit!? Oh, may we not be like Elijah who wrote his own ticket to get under that juniper tree. Instead, may we be like Jesus who pressed on to fulfill his mission, even in the lonely hours of Gethsemane.

What are we going to say on judgment day when all those pages of the days of sulking, of feeling sorry for ourselves, of self-pity, will be opened in our book of works done in the body (Rev. 10:12)? What are we going to say when we are told what wonderful works God had planned to do through us on those quitting days, on our time out days, had we only remained faithful to the course?

My friend, let us look at one of the passages where you would think Jesus certainly had good reason to at least take some time out to nourish his hurts or disappointments. In the eighth chapter of John, we see Jesus in the temple at the Feast of Tabernacles. Here, this perfect man of God is first thrown into a trap to be accused by the Pharisees (v. 6).

How does it feel when religious people of the highest calling are banding together to wreck the work God has called one to do? How does it feel when you have lost the trust not only of the outsiders but of the inner core of the religious establishment? How does it feel when these people make a deliberate attempt to destroy you through lies, trickery and innuendoes? Oh, my friend, is it quitting time – is it “time out” time? Then, how does it feel when you have done your very best and the people who failed to trap you decide to pick up stones and kill you anyway (v. 59)?

Let me ask you: has God called you to the work you are doing or was it man who got you into this? If man has called you to the work, then you are entitled to quit when man opposes you. But if God has called you to your work, opposition, mistrust and abuse at the hands of man are never excuses to lay down your armor and to sulk in a corner. The one who calls you is the one who will be with you, and his grace will carry you through if you just keep your eyes upon him. Praise the Lord! God is not a quitter. God is not a sulker, and neither are the godly as long as they keep the old man on the cross.

Indeed, Jesus did not take time out in these eighth and ninth chapters of John, even though he was accused of having a devil and an attempt was made to kill him. As he walked out of the temple, he immediately came upon a man who had been born blind. Hallelujah!

The Scriptures say, “And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man....” The Greek word for “saw” here is *eido*, implying something more than meets the eye. It includes observing and grasping the whole calamity of this man’s case. It includes knowing and understanding. This is in contrast to the Greek word *blepo* which merely means seeing only with the physical eyes. Yes, when Jesus was leaving the temple, he “saw” the man born blind. Praise the Lord!

When you are abused, mistreated or called something degrading in the church sanctuary, do you, when you walk out onto the sidewalk of your church, still **see** (*eido*) the need of one brother for a new suit, the need of another for new tires for his car, the need of another for prayer or for healing, or the need of another to be served a meal? Do you still **see** a piece of trash on the church lawn that needs to be picked up? Or are you now at the point where “seeing, you no longer see”? When you are thus unfairly treated, do you continue on in your ministry of love and compassion, or do you stop seeing the needs of others, being entirely wrapped up in your own mistreatment?

When we take time out, we lose momentum in the work of God. We come to a standstill and will soon be drifting back into the muck of self-occupation that God once delivered us from.

If Jesus ever had reason to take time out to “put himself back together,” to cry a little, to ask to be comforted a little, to be consoled by his disciples a little before he could and would go on – he had it here. Is there any just reason for self-denial to stop when you have been emotionally attacked or damaged? The healing of the blind man followed immediately after Jesus’ violent expulsion from the temple. No, Jesus did not take time out. He did not allow bitterness, disappointment and disillusionment to accumulate in his heart. He went right on ministering.

Beware of time outs. Time outs from God’s work generally mean “time in” for the devil to sow his seeds of bitterness, resentment, anger, and self-pity into our hearts. When we take time out for hurt feelings or self-pity, we begin to “save” our life, and Jesus said, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it” (Luke 9:24). Time outs are dangerous unless God gives them to us to equip us for a greater work ahead. Jesus did not take time out.

Paul also did not take time out. After being knocked out and given up for dead, he regained consciousness and continued with his preaching ministry (Acts 14:19ff). Nor did he and Silas quit when they had been beaten and put in the stocks. Instead, they lifted their voices of prayer and praise and led the jailer and his family to salvation (Acts. 16:19-34).

What all could you have accomplished if you had not stopped to take time out and sit under the juniper tree? What all are we missing by lying on our faces? Did Joshua and his elders have a license to lie on their faces after the defeat of Ai, or did they only have a license from God to conquer the promised land one step at a time?

Look at your license, look at your contract with God and see if it includes “time outs” from serving, from loving, from noticing the needs of others. Study your contract to see if it includes feeling sorry for yourself, to look at your shortcomings and your faults, dwelling on them over and over again as the devil brings them to you. Does your contract with God include thinking negatively about those who trouble you? When you are bruised and crushed, do you still see the need to pray for and with your pastor to help him in his hour of trial? Oh, what does our work contract with God consist of?

Jesus was falsely accused, falsely blamed for having a devil, falsely spat upon, falsely mocked, falsely ridiculed, falsely struck in the face, and crucified – yet, he never ceased to **see** (eido) the needs of others. Indeed, upon the cross, he showed concern for his mother when he said to John, “Behold thy mother!” (John 19:27), and he even poured forth his heart in compassion toward those who had placed him upon the cross as he cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Every moment of Jesus’ life was given in service to others. The life he gave at Calvary was the life he lost moment by moment in giving himself without variation or vacation.

Let me end with this question: Do the words of Jesus, “...as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21), include the same call that we, like him, are to refuse all “down times” and keep the momentum of service for Jesus, until we come to our appointed time of rest in heaven with him forever?

Ask Jesus to forgive you for the time outs you have taken that lacked his signature of approval, and get back on track so that from now on every page of your book – your heavenly book of works – will be filled with deeds of joyful obedience and thoughts of things which are lovely, pure, honest, and of a good report. Yes, dear friend, if you are in a “time out” now, come back in. Jesus has been missing you. He will be glad to have you back!

"Then took they up stones to cast at him...
And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth!"