

Principles Or Expediency?

When under pressure or competition is it principles or expediency that guides your decision and actions?

Dictionaries define principles to include:- basic truth, law, rule of moral or ethical standards; a fixed or predetermined policy or mode of action; accepted or professed rule of action or conduct; fundamental doctrine or tenet; guiding sense of the requirements and obligations of right conduct; etc.

Expediency on the other hand is defined to include something that is conducive to personal advantage or self-interest, as opposed to right. It is something that could be used to meet an urgent need, or as a means to an end of some proposed or desired object.

These questions highlight the difference between the two.

1. What caused the recent near global collapse of financial institutions? Was it lack of knowledge, principles and laws of sound financial management or the relegation of these for expediency, through lack of discipline – and under the hope of quick gain?
2. What caused the collapse of the ancient Roman Empire? Was it lack of military might, laws, knowledge and principles of sound government or abandoning these for ease and pleasure through moral decay?

When viewed in these perspectives, it becomes easier to understand why Paul the apostle said:

- “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (I Corinthians 6:12).
- “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (I Corinthians 10:23).

In these scriptures, Paul used “expedient” with respect to God, whereas in contemporary times (as used in this leaflet) expedient is always with respect to self-interest.

Acting on expediency rather than principles weakens the faculties for effective decision making and could lead to oppression and divine judgment as borne out in the story of Ephraim – “Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, because he was content to walk after man’s command” (Hosea 5:11). The King James version renders this as “...he willingly walked after the commandment...” Such willingness to obey King Jeroboam’s commandment who made idols for the Northern kingdom to worship (I Kings 12:28, 32-33) so as to cut them off from Jerusalem was based on expediency rather than principle; and was a choice at the expense of God’s laws.

The reason for the expedient decision may have been to please man for political or economic gains or other advantage. For this sin, God judged them justly, even through the unjust judgment of man. God mostly punishes, through their own choice, those who choose against His. For example, the Jews said, “we have no king but Caesar,” and Caesar destroyed them.

People who follow expediency always think that God's laws are strange. For Ephraim the Bible has this to say of them - "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12).

When the Israelites were on the way to the promised land, God specifically instructed them to utterly destroy the inhabitants of the land He was taking them to, adding the warning "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them" (Numbers 33:55,56).

On arrival at the Promised Land, expediency suggested to them that they could make gain of the inhabitants of the land through slavery and tributary rather than total obedience to God's commandments. It is worth noting from this example that temporary short-term gains can rob one of permanent long term profits (including eternity). Note God's judgment that came to them through this disobedience "And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out

from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you" (Judges 2:1-3).

It is for your good to always bear these points in mind:

1. Under trials, pressures and temptations it is always better to stick to principles than resort to expediency.
2. A little compromise (i.e. bending) on principles is like being pregnant a little. When a person is pregnant for one hour there is no difference in physical appearance, activities, etc and nobody may know it by looking. The foetus at that time is so tiny that it is invisible to the naked eye. However, with time the foetus grows and produces other noticeable changes. Eventually, what is conceived is born to become a force for either good or evil! It is only a matter of time for the consequences of a little pregnancy to materialise in reality! What you are pregnant with will eventually show forth with time! What are you pregnant with now – principles or expediency?
3. It takes honesty, integrity, determination, discipline and diligence to stick to principles especially when the pressure is high.



Your spiritual welfare is our concern. For further help, please contact:

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