What Keeps You Up at Night?

By Tom Jones

The other night I was having some trouble getting to sleep. Something had happened between two of my friends and it also impacted me. I was going over everything in my mind. After a couple of hours of debating with myself about how I could help resolve the problem, I found myself getting more intense in my “righteous indignation” and not able to unwind and go to sleep.

Now to put this in perspective, my wife will tell you that in six minutes or less – I am usually sound asleep. Tossing issues around in my mind while in bed is not a common practice for me. But this particular issue had stirred me up more than once since it had occurred. Each time I debated how to rectify it in my mind, I found myself getting more offended about what happened.

On this particular night, at the crescendo of my righteous indignation – a sudden thought crossed my mind. What about my indignation was righteous? Ephesians 4:26 says “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:” then the next verse came to mind “Neither give place to the devil.”

Notice the punctuation. It is not two sentences. It is one.

Suddenly my “righteous” indignation collapsed like a dropped water balloon. It was not righteous indignation. It was hurt feelings. I wasn’t truly upset about how someone else had been treated. Oh, it started out that way, but at this point it was about my feelings being hurt - again.

I wanted to “justly” prevent that from happening again, but in the process of trying to right a wrong that was done to someone else – I became unjust. I gave place to the devil. I let Satan (probably just an underling) whisper in my ear for hours.

When I realized what had happened, I repented to the Lord. Instead of thinking how I was going to resolve this, I realized that I can’t. Oh, I could argue with someone and try to persuade them that they need to change their behavior, but I have done that in the past. The only person I can change is me.

I have been listening to C.S. Lewis’ The Screwtape Letters and I think he made some valid points. The devil’s strength is not in the full force frontal attack. It is when he takes a Christian’s efforts to be righteous and moves the focus just a couple of degrees off center. Like a master of the martial arts, he lets the momentum of our own efforts effectively push us past the point of being relevant.

A good offensive tackle can take the enthusiastic rush of a defensive player and simply bump him past the quarter-back and move on to another threat. The devil can take our enthusiastic rush to be righteous and bump us past our goal and we become totally ineffective.

Like a good pass rusher – we can recover, if we realize it soon enough and hustle to get back in the play. Often, we just strike the ground with our fist out of frustration with ourselves.

I am glad to be able to say that after repenting before the Lord I realized that was not enough. I began praying for that person. I began praying for the person the I felt was wronged. I started praying for everyone that came to mind. Before I knew it, it was morning. I had fallen to sleep.

The devil and his host are eager to whisper in our ears how unjust we have been treated or rally our indignation over how someone else has been treated. Just look at the streets of America today. But when we start praying for those same people – it is amazing how fast the whispers disappear and the nurturing sleep that we so desperately need will come.

What keeps you up at night? Or maybe I should ask – who keeps you up at night? The Lord provides rest to those who follow Him.

Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (KJV)

Exodus 33:14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. (KJV)