

**WORDS TO WIN BY
CARRYING THROUGH WITH FAITH TO THE END
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MID-ATLANTIC ZONE LEADER**

From “The Hero of the World,” The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 835–39.

If there are any among my followers who are weak in faith and go against what I, Nichiren, say, they will meet the same fate as did the Soga family. I will tell you the reason.... Draw your own conclusions from what I said above. Those among my followers who fail to carry through their faith to the end will incur punishment even more severe. Even so, they should not harbor a grudge against me. Remember what fate Sho-bo, Noto-bo, and others met. (WND, 838)

In the above passage, Nichiren Daishonin explains that one’s posture toward the Mystic Law determines either victory or defeat in one’s life. Those who give up their faith halfway, he says, will incur even greater loss than that of the Soga family. According to official histories, in the face of initial hostility, the Soga clan championed Buddhism in Japan when it was first introduced there. As a result they thrived, eventually emerging as the most powerful clan in the country. Unfortunately, under the spell of unrivalled power as the only influential clan in the country, they succumbed to arrogance. Departing totally from the spirit of the Buddhism that they outwardly embraced, they committed inhumane acts and were eventually ruined.

Shofu-bo and Noto-bo were disciples of the Daishonin who later abandoned their faith. Shofu-bo is said to have begun harboring doubts in the Daishonin around the time of the Izu exile in 1261, eventually turning against him. And, although Noto-bo fought to defend the Daishonin during the attack at Matsubagayatsu in 1260, and was even wounded, he is thought to have abandoned faith around 1271.

The Daishonin explains that, “Retribution varies according to the degree of slander against the correct teaching” (WND, 625). From this we understand that if a person who has embraced Buddhism for a while and knows something of its profundity should abandon faith, turning against the correct teaching, his error is greater than that of someone who out of ignorance opposes it from the outset. Or, from another perspective, if a person of venerable rank, who is supposed to be responsible for leading others to happiness, should then begin to oppose the Daishonin’s teaching, his slander is far greater than someone who with little understanding of Buddhism foolishly abandons faith.

The Daishonin makes it clear that deepening our faith is a life long effort. It is the law of causality that guarantees the transformation of our lives. If we continue in our efforts to deepen our faith not allowing ourselves to be distracted or veer off course when confronted with difficulties, we will be able to accumulate immeasurable good fortune.

Conversely, if we allow ourselves to succumb to negative influences, causing the Daishonin’s words of encouragement to go unheeded, thereby turning our backs on the Mystic Law—our eternal Buddha nature—we will experience the resulting negative effects of those actions as well.

The main point is to maintain faith throughout life. The Daishonin, out of profound concern for his disciple, is admonishing Shijo Kingo here, that, in the face of the threats confronting him, he should never retreat in faith. Further, when he says that “they should

not harbor a grudge against Nichiren,” the Daishonin is making it clear that the “punishment” or defeat that those who turn against the correct teaching experience is based entirely on the law of cause and effect. In spite of the greatness of the Daishonin’s teaching, it is the result of opposing the Mystic Law.

However, by exerting ourselves in faith, the good fortune and benefit we amass in this lifetime affects not only our families and friends, but our ancestors and descendants as well—leading all to enlightenment.