

15. Integrity of a man of God

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On April 8, 1997, New York Times newspaper had a very interesting article that topped the theories of the disaster of the Titanic which claimed some 1,500 lives and the luxury ocean liner on that fateful night of April 14, 1912.

A persistent theory is that the iceberg tore open a 300-foot gigantic gash in the side of the 900-foot-long luxury liner. How else could a ship so costly and so well constructed – the biggest and supposedly safest vessel then afloat, one hailed as unsinkable even by God? Why did the Titanic go down so fast? Was there no way to avoid the disaster?

Peering through the mud with sound waves, the international team of scientists and engineers found the damage to be astonishingly small – a series of six thin openings across the Titanic's starboard hull across the six watertight holds. The total area of the damage appears to be about 12 to 13 square feet, or less than the area of two sidewalk squares.

The small damage, invisible to most, sank the great ship.

Former U.S. Senator Alan Simpson once said, "If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don't have integrity, nothing else matters." How true! But in our culture, integrity doesn't mean a whole lot. As personal and public integrity and trust eroded, we've become suspicious of one another from courthouse, to the White House, to church house, and to individual house.

From chapter 3, Job had been insisting that he had his integrity in every area of life while he was falsely accused by his own friends day and night for sometime now. We must not only admire his endurance in the face of excruciating physical and emotional sufferings, but also we stand in awe of the way he modeled integrity.

In chapter 29 through 31, Job is giving his closing defense argument after the three rounds of debates among him and his so-called friends. He recalled the blessings of the past in Job 29, lamented the sufferings of the present in chapter 30, and challenged God to vindicate him in the future in chapter 31.

A. JOB'S GOOD OLD DAYS

Job 29:1-6 Job further continued his discourse, and said: 2 Oh, that I were as in months past, As in the days when God watched over me; 3 When His lamp shone upon my head, And when by His light I walked through darkness; 4 Just as I was in the days of my prime, When the friendly counsel of God was over my tent; 5 When the Almighty was yet with me, When my children were around me; 6 When my steps were bathed with cream, And the rock poured out rivers of oil for me!

Job is remembering the blessings he and his family had enjoyed prior to his crisis. This is a good reminder for all of us that we should see life in a balanced way. Yes, God permits us to experience difficulties and sorrows to strengthen our spiritual endurance, but He also generously provides us victories and joy beyond measure.

I cannot teach without quoting at least one of Charles Spurgeon's insightful statements. He once said, "Too many people write their blessings in the sand but engrave their sorrows in marble." Ain't that the truth?!

When we are going through trials and tests, it is natural for us to long for “the good old days”, but our longing will not change the situations. I heard someone define “the good old days” as “a combination of bad memory and a good imagination.” But in Job’s case, he really remembered the good old days with accurate memory.

Job wished that he were back in the days when everything was good. While this is a natural desire, it is also a dangerous one. If we focus so much on the glories of the past that we ignore the opportunities of the present, we may end up unprepared to meet the future. The past must be a rudder to guide us and not an anchor to hold us back.

B. JOB THE ADVOCATE

Job 29:12-16 Because I delivered the poor who cried out, The fatherless and the one who had no helper. 13 The blessing of a perishing man came upon me, And I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. 14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban. 15 I was eyes to the blind, And I was feet to the lame. 16 I was a father to the poor, And I searched out the case that I did not know.

Even though Job was extremely rich, he didn’t have a haughty and pompous attitude. He was one of the down-to-earth people and was kind to the needy people. By doing so, he brought glory and honor to the Lord. It is another great example of Job’s integrity.

This reminds me of a friend of mine: Colonel Max Maxwell, the Commander of the United States Air Force the 943rd Rescue Group, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. This godly man is not only a great Commander, but also a phenomenal helicopter pilot. His ParaRescue operators love to fly in his helicopter because he really knows what he is doing. He is fair, firm, and friendly with his men regardless of ranks without a compromise. This brings great glory to his Savior Jesus.

There are two things I choose not to know in our church:

- How many people attend our church – I don’t want to be prideful, nor do I want to be depressed.
- Who is giving how much to our church – I don’t want to show my favoritism to those who are rich.

James 2:2-5 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

There was a man who used to attend our church with his wife briefly. He told me that I should thank him for his donation. I told him, “I don’t handle the church finance at all and I don’t know and don’t care to know who is giving how much. Besides, giving to the Lord is between you and God. Why should I get involved in that?” He wasn’t happy that I still didn’t thank him so he left the church with an angry heart.

C. JOB THE SUFFERER

Job 30:1 "But now they mock at me, men younger than I, Whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.

Job 30:9-10 "And now I am their taunting song; Yes, I am their byword. 10

They abhor me, they keep far from me; They do not hesitate to spit in my face.

Can you almost hear Job's groan in v1? Job was wise enough to know that he had to face the reality of the present and not escape into the memory of the past. People who refuse to come to grips with life are in danger of losing touch with reality, and soon they lose touch with themselves.

If you know someone who is poor, sick, or in turmoil, be kind and merciful to them. Never, ever think that you are better than them, because you are not suffering like them right now.

Job 30:24-25 "Surely He would not stretch out His hand against a heap of ruins, If they cry out when He destroys it. 25 Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?"

We have to wonder where the people whom Job had helped before his crisis were. Surely some of them would have wanted to show their appreciation by encouraging their benefactor in his time of need. But nobody came to his aid. I wouldn't be surprised if satan himself prevented Job's neighbors from helping him. Mark Twain wrote, "If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man." No kidding.

Ever since we started the studies in the Book of Job, the trials, tests, illness, and hardship among our congregation have become intensified, even a death. It is as if the Lord is telling us, "Since you are learning all these from Job, let's see if you can practice what you are learning." Take a heart, we only have three more weeks to go.

Actually, folks, suffering helps us straighten out our priorities, And often, the deeper our pain, the clearer our vision becomes regarding what's truly important in life. When we're hurting, we allow ourselves to slow down and see our lives from God's point of view. We notice those people and things around us that we've been neglecting. Instead of trying to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps, we humbly recognize our dependence upon our Father and set our minds on the things of God.

The highest reward for a faithful life is not what we get for it but what we become by it.

D. JOB THE MAN OF INTEGRITY WITH HIS EYES

Job 31:1 "I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?"

How refreshing to hear a godly man say this! In the 21st Century, it is almost next impossible not to see some sort of pornography images – whether it is soft or hardcore – from newspaper, magazines, billboards, TV advertisements, sitcoms, video games, internet, and of course, movies.

America, no, the entire world is addicted to porn. Selling sex is one of the oldest businesses in the world, and right now, business has never been better. According to a research firm's data in 2011, the porn industry in America made \$13 billion dollars in revenue.

28% are female and 72% are male among the visitors to pornography site.
17% of women say that they struggle with pornography addiction.
67% of children admit to clearing their internet history to hide their internet activity.
79% of accidental exposures to internet porn among kids take place in the home.
56% of divorce cases involve one party having an obsessive interest in internet porn.
58% suffer considerable financial losses through internet porn.
29% of working adults accessed explicit websites on work computers and end up losing their jobs.
50% of Christian males who attend church are addicted to internet porn.

It is one thing to see and admire an attractive person, but it is quite something else to look for the purpose of lusting in the heart. Jesus clearly taught us about this in His Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Matthew:

Matthew 5:28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

While sin in the heart is not as destructive physically as sin actually committed, it is the first step toward the act; and we never know where a polluted imagination will lead us. Furthermore, God above looks down and sees both our actions and the thoughts and intents of the heart; and He will judge both.

If you are having problems with internet pornography, I highly recommend you to have some protective filters in your computer that stop you from visiting those porn web sites or receiving pornographic emails. You can get more information from www.covenanteyes.com. Don't ever say, "I can handle it." You cannot. That is why they call it 'addiction.' Make yourself accountable to someone godly who is the same sex as you are. Do whatever it takes to keep yourself pure from being sucked into that downward spiral to the pit of hell.

Matthew 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Integrity and spiritual maturity show their true side behind the closed door when no one is watching.

Now, what I am about to say may not settle well with some ladies. I understand that you'd like to be in the current fashion in your clothing. I don't have a problem with that, nor do I tell you that you have to wear a gunny sack to be holy and godly as a Christian woman.

But you don't need to wear the same kind of short mini-skirt, low-cut top or skin tight clothing like a secular ungodly woman. Be modest in clothing so that you don't encourage men to lust after you. I know, I know. You may say, "Hey preacher, some guys will lust after a tree trunk if you put a woman's skirt around it." Yes, that might be true. But you don't want to be a stumbling block, either.

E. CLOSING THOUGHT

1) Integrity is completeness or soundness while no one is watching you.

You have integrity if you complete a job even when no one is looking; You have integrity if you keep your word even when no one checks up on you; You have integrity if you keep your promises.

2) Integrity means the absence of duplicity and is the opposite of hypocrisy.

If you are a person of integrity, you will do what you say. What you declare, you will do your best to be. Integrity also includes financial accountability, personal reliability, and private purity. A person with integrity does not manipulate others. He or she is not prone to arrogance or self-praise.

3) Integrity even invites constructive and necessary criticism because it applauds accountability.

It's sound. It's solid. It's complete. What you see is what you get from a person of integrity. That is a good goal to follow.