

LIVING CHRISTIAN IN A CRITICAL WORLD

SCRIPTURE : I Peter 2:9-17

TEXT: I Peter 2:12 “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

PURPOSE: To call Christians to a life of moral integrity and character.

PROPOSITION: God’s people should desire to live impeccable lives that honor God.

INTRODUCTION:

I was visiting the home of a man who was cynical and critical. Upon talking with him about God, he commenced to harangue the church—pastors, church members, leadership, church attenders. “You may think they are good people, but I know the truth. I’ve had business dealings with them. I know.”

Another man who grew up in the church, an active and positive booster said, “I have a rough time in my business. I want to work with people from the church, but I have been lied to, cheated, promised time and time again. I can’t count on them.”

1. It may be easier to take the rash bold statements of a cynic, than it is a disappointed and hurt believer.
2. What grabs our attention, is the need for credibility among believers.
3. We are forced to ask ourselves—personally and individually—“Are my actions, conversations, business practices becoming of a Christian?”
4. Good and godly people can unknowingly drift into careless and sinful habits.
5. How do we lose our credibility?
 1. By following the examples of unbelievers.

We learn behavior patterns from others. So a Christian salesman, trained by an unethical, half-truthful salesman, assumes without question this is an acceptable practice.

2. By sagging in our alertness
3. By allowing our conduct and conversation to go unchallenged.
4. By a subtle shift of priorities.

The necessary concern of making a living, getting ahead, being successful can take the place of, or crowd out our desire to be godly.

I. REASONS WE NEED TO WORK AT BEING CREDIBLE

A. Because we are God’s people (9).

1. We are not the person we used to be.
2. We have been chosen; especially selected.
3. We are to proclaim the wonderful act of God.
4. We have experienced His kindness and mercy.
5. We are God’s people.

I was once tempted to smoke. I chose not to because I wanted my Dad to think well of me.

B. Because lack of integrity reflects on you (11).

1. Your reputation and character are valuable.
 2. Don't sell it for a convenient lie or smooth deed.
 - C. Because lack of consistent Christian living cripples other believers (17).
 1. It retards their spiritual growth.
 2. It limits their effectiveness in an attempt to bring an unsaved world to Christ.
 - D. Because unbelievers are looking on (15).
 1. The world may have greater expectations of you than you have for yourself.
 2. You say, "Sometimes they expect absolute perfection from Christians. Is that fair?"
- # No, and we need to humbly explain that to them. On the other hand, it is the Christian who is asked to become all things to all people in order to save some.
3. God wants us to live attentive to circumstances and consequences so that criticism cannot get a foothold.
 4. Accusations will be silenced by the good deeds and kindness of believers.

II. OBJECTIONS TO LIVING UNDER SURVEILLANCE

- A. "I've always said, 'Get your eyes off people.'"
 1. This problem is two-fold:
 - a. It isn't scriptural
 - 1) Paul said to his new converts in the church, "Follow me as I follow Christ" and "Imitate me."
 - 2) Jesus invited His men to follow Him.
 - b. It is opposed to human nature.
 - 1) We learn by copying others.
 - 2) We all have examples (good and poor) after whom we have patterned our lives.
 2. "Isn't it risky to have people watching you?"
 - a. Sure it is.
 - b. That is why God tells us to live scrupulously.
 - c. People will watch you.
 - d. Whether we like it or intend it, we will be witnesses to God's effectiveness.
- B. "Look! People will always misinterpret events and cloud the truth."
 1. You are right.
 2. You will be accused of doing wrong (12).
 3. All the more reason to live credibly, so their criticism of you will be overshadowed by your kindness, love and respect.
 4. We have lived long enough on the faulty logic of: "We can't please everybody, so why try. I'll do my own thing."
- C. "I'm not about to be in bondage to other people's convictions."
 1. We are to be free people.
 2. However, we are not to use our freedom to do anything we want, regardless of how it affects others (16).
 3. The persons who plead for independence from all restraint, are shirking their God-given responsibility.
 4. Anyone who does what he pleases regardless of the consequences, will experience the full wrath of God.

5. "I don't care what people think!"
- # Jesus said it would be better for a person to drown than to cause someone to lose their faith (Matthew 18:6-7).
- D. "I think this is nit-picking. God is not worried about the little things, such as whether I get to work on time or fudge on my coffee break, or exceed the speed limit."
 1. Whatever affects our relationship with God and diminishes our influence among people should be of vital concern.
 2. Our reputation should be valued, because our character reflects on other Christians.

III. HOW DO I DEVELOP CREDIBILITY?

- A. Raise your ideals to the level of God's expectations of you.
 1. This prevents human criticism from defeating us or making us super-sensitive.
 2. Our behavior is to meet God's approval.
 - B. Conscientiously pursue your ideals
 - C. Recognize that the temptation will always be present to compromise your standards (11).
 - D. Apologize for indiscretion.
 1. Don't resist the prompting to make amends.
 2. Finding forgiveness is a trait of God's people.
- # Brenda struck out at her husband's former wife who had it coming. She felt checked out of God, and asked forgiveness for her angered response. "It was the hardest thing I ever did, but I felt better for having done it."
- E. Reevaluate your priorities.
 1. What ideally may be the right priorities through actual practice may be rearranged.
- # God is first, but work crowds out worship and acts of kindness, because we are too busy.
2. Bring priorities into alignment with God's Word.
- F. Allow God's Spirit to develop the fruit of faithfulness (reliability)
 - G. Be sensitive to the feelings of people.
 - H. Let the people of God (His church) guide you.
 1. The corporate conscience is God's provision.
 2. Interdependence takes place in the body of Christ.
 3. God uses the criticism and eyes of others to check our unconsidered and unchallenged conduct.

CONCLUSION:

- # Gloria Learn said to a man, "You will one day regret the decision you made."
 "Perhaps I will. With the knowledge I have now, I don't think so. If I ever do, I'll let you know."
 Four years later, God reminded him. He would not have had to repent. She would never have known, but he would have. It was a matter of integrity—a way of life. The acknowledgement was made.