

## *The Proof Is In The Detail*

A song writer once penned these poignant lines:

If you say you know the Saviour,  
If you say you know the Lord,  
If you say your sins are forgiven,  
My brother (or sister), show it by the life you live!

When it comes to true greatness in godliness, the proof does not lie in empires built, wealth amassed nor fame achieved but in the details of personal deeds and actions.

You may have probably heard the common expression that “the devil lies in the details”. Any serious heavenly minded Christian cannot afford to ignore the details of deeds in life. The pursuit of “big picture” is not an excuse for ignoring details, as the end does not always justify the means. Moses’ life is an illustration of this. Though a mighty miracle took place and the multitudes were happy, yet God was displeased because Moses struck the rock whereas God told him to speak to the rock. Consequently, he lost the Promised Land that he laboured for most of his life (Numbers 20:8-12). Writing to early Christians (I Corinthians 13:1-3), Paul pointed out that the proof of true godliness does not lie in:

1. Spiritual gifts (e.g. speaking in tongues, prophecy, understanding of mysteries)
2. Miraculous powers (e.g. faith to move mountains)
3. Great works of charity or sacrifice (e.g. giving for feeding the poor, offering self to be burned, etc); but in the demonstration of genuine godly love.

Great reputation and godly character are not always synonymous. Paul’s admonition to the Romans – “**Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?**” (Romans 2:22-23); reveals that a person may be highly reputable but flawed in character.

Examples abound both from contemporary times and Bible days of “... **a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.**” (Proverbs 30:12). Consider these few cases:

1. David utterly condemned the actions of the man described in Nathan’s parable, only to learn shortly thereafter that “**Thou art the man**” (2 Samuel 12:5-7). His judgment was aimed at creating the impression and reputation of a man with high degree of integrity, piety and justice. Appearance can be deceptive! It is often the case that a person may be privately condoning the very things s/he is publicly condemning!
2. Isaiah preached many fiery sermons (e.g. chapters 1-3); but when he saw the glory of the Lord, he discovered that he needed cleansing from unclean lips (Isaiah 6:5). Fiery and fervent preaching against evil is not always an indication of a life free from evil!
3. Solomon who did not practice the sound precepts he preached. For instance:
  - a) He admonished others “**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.**”

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14); but he spent most of his time on what he later described as “vanity and vexation of spirit”. He lived as if he was exempted from the judgment he warned others of.

b) He warned his “son” from the dangers of the “strange woman” (Proverbs 2:16); but he himself was deceived by many “strange women” (I Kings 11:1) who turned his heart away from God. “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father” (I Kings 11:4).

Do not be discouraged for the situation is not hopeless. By God’s grace it is possible to achieve consistent godliness all the days of life. Personal discipline and diligence are essential requirements to achieving true godliness. Proverbs 25:28 points out that “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls”. We must pursue it with determination and be prepared to die for what we believe. The following examples illustrate that true godliness is attainable:

1. Daniel was so godly that his enemies “... could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him” (Daniel 6:4).

2. Paul displayed a model conduct and challenged the believers “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe” (I Thessalonians 2:10). It was through the power of such example that he boldly demanded of others “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1).

3. Jesus our perfect example was so flawless that He challenged his enemies “which of you convinceth me of sin?” (John 8:46) and no one could find any fault. He was comfortable about anyone publicly disclosing anything he did or said in private – “What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops” (Matthew 10:27). What a model for transparent leadership! Jesus the true shepherd was so different from many spiritual shepherds, some of whom fit the description of those in Ezekiel 34:4 who ruled “... with force and with cruelty”.

“It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord...” (Matthew 10:25). This is the expressed will of God. And it is attainable!



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

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