

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR REPUTATION

By Fred Newman

What are some of the first thoughts that come to your mind when you hear these Bible names: Jezebel, Delilah, Ananias and Saphira, and Judas Iscariot? These names generally conjure very negative images within one's mind. Why is this? What is it that causes one to think so negatively about Judas Iscariot? Was he not a disciple of the Lord? He devoted himself to the service of Jesus Christ for a period of more than three years. Did he not make some of the same sacrifices of the other eleven whom Jesus had chosen? So what causes his name to be associated with such negativity? It is Judas's reputation and the reputation of these others which has permanently inscribed their names on the timeline of history as infamous characters.

A good reputation is very delicate. It is difficult to establish and maintain a good name. On the other hand, one wrong step can mar or destroy a good reputation for years or even a lifetime. Each of us must be very diligent in caring for our reputation.

Consider a couple of verses which highlight the critical importance of one's reputation:

“A good name is better than precious ointment...” (Eccl. 7:1).

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold” (Prov. 22:1).

The Holy Spirit tells you and me that a good name (reputation) is extremely valuable and is to be chosen rather than great riches. Why would that be so?

What others think and say about us determines their willingness to interact with us, do business with us and/or put their trust in us. More importantly, God's children should be people who have and maintain a good reputation, not for the purpose of obtaining the praises of men, rather that God's name would be glorified through their lives.

There are many avenues through which one's reputation is established and maintained. Let's consider some of these:

Consistency - Jesus said that people will know one by the fruit that they bear in their life. *“Therefore by their fruits you will know them”* (Matt. 7:20). While one may wear the name, Christian, their life may reflect something altogether different. It is critical that those who claim to be a disciple of Christ live a life that is consistent with their vocation. God rebuked His people because they gave reason for His name to be spoken against by the obvious discrepancy between their lives and His law. *“You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you...’”* (Rom. 2:23-24). Remember the old adage, “Practice what you preach.” This is exactly how God calls His people to live - consistent with their claim.

Good Deeds - God's people should be known as people who are doers of good deeds (Titus 2:14). Jesus said that others will glorify God when they see us doing good deeds in His name. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matt. 5:16). Notice the reputation that Dorcas had among the people in the community where she lived. *“At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did... And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them”* (Acts 9:36, 39). God requires His people to be fruitful by being people who have a reputation for their good works. *“And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful”* (Titus 3:14).

Integrity - is defined as, “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.” God's people should be known for their truthfulness. *“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes,’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment”* (Jas. 5:12). Paul admonished the Christians in Ephesus to put away lying (a work of the flesh), instead, *“Let each one of*

you speak truth with his neighbor" (Eph. 4:25). Peter told the Christians of the Dispersion, *"having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation"* (1 Pet. 2:12). In other words, live in such a way as to disprove all the false accusations that people may level against you.

Joshes was named **"Barnabas"** by the apostles. His name meant, **"Son of Encouragement."** What a wonderful reputation to be dubbed with such a name, Son of Encouragement, because of what others saw in his life. All of us are known by our words, our attitudes, and our deeds. Let each of us strive to live in such a way as to establish and maintain a good reputation that will reflect favorably upon ourselves, our families, but most importantly upon the name of Christ. What are you known for? ■

GOD IS WATCHING

By David Dann

According to the inspired psalmist, *"The Lord is in His holy temple, The Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men"* (Psa. 11:4, NKJV). Although God dwells in heaven, He is constantly aware of what is taking place in the life of every person inhabiting the earth. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way: *"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"* (Heb. 4:13).

What is God watching as He looks down from heaven upon mankind?

He is watching our hearts and minds. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, *"I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings"* (Jer. 17:10). The true inner character, thoughts, and intentions of each person are known to God. Because this is true, King David instructed his son, saying, *"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever"* (1 Chron. 28:9). When God watches our hearts and minds does He see hearts and minds that are loyal to Him and focused on godliness, or does He see hearts and minds filled with envy, hypocrisy, and impurity?

He is watching our words. The psalmist spoke to God, saying, *"For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether"* (Psa. 139:4). God hears and knows every word that is uttered by every person. In light of this fact, Jesus said, *"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* (Matt. 12:36-37). When God watches our words does He hear words that praise Him, that edify others, and that are pure, or does He hear words that are false, profane, and hurtful?

He is watching our actions. The inspired wise man writes, *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good"* (Prov. 15:3). The God of heaven is alert to all the activities and actions in which people engage at all times and in all places. Rather than simply serving as a casual observer of human behavior, God will hold man accountable for his actions. Jesus said, *"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works"* (Matt. 16:27). When God watches our actions does He see obedience, kindness, and unselfishness, or does He see immorality, wickedness, and deeds that are harmful to others?

Conclusion

Faithful servants of God should be encouraged by the fact that He is watching to continue to strive to always be pleasing in His sight. On the other hand, His watchful eye should serve as motivation for sinners to repent and seek forgiveness through the sacrifice of His Son. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil"* (Eccl. 12:13-14). As we consider our own hearts, words, and actions, is God pleased with what He sees? ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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