

#90 IDENTITY IN FINANCES: **The Destruction of a Good Name**

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Usually when we think of a man losing his reputation, or good name, we think of that man falling into immorality. Although there is a strong connection between money and immorality, in the Scriptures we find more of a focus on how a man handles his financial affairs. When I think of a man of integrity, I think of a man who does not waver under the temptation of compromise. Compromise is nothing short of settling for less than God's ideal. The not-so-funny thing about compromise is that it usually happens a little at a time. It all starts with a paper clip and gradually ends up with stealing corporate time, i.e. faking a sickness because you "needed" a little down time. Maybe you are the dishonest one who is billing for services that you don't plan to fulfill. Here is a good one: write-off personal expenses onto a corporate account, which happens to be the number one corporate abuse in America.

Compromise happens when we attempt to adjust our standards to our own pleasures. James talks about our source of quarrels and conflicts. Check this out:

"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:1-4).

James just comes right out and tells us the unadulterated truth. The reason we have conflict in our lives is because our pleasures wage war with what is right. We lust and realize what we don't have, so we compromise. The basic fact here is we are upset that we cannot obtain that "new gadget" without a compromise, so we do the very thing we hate and COMPROMISE. God wants us to see that we do not have, because we do not ask with the right motive. He loves to answer our prayers when we ask with the right motives. People asking with wrong motives are typically friends with the world. James shows us that people who have friendships with the world make themselves hostile toward God. In fact, he goes on to say that anyone who IS a friend with the world is God's enemy. Ouch!

People of compromise are revealing the evidence that their friendship with the world is much more important than their friendship with God. The world is watching "Christians" far closer than the "Christian" is willing to admit. Unbelievers are watching to determine if the so-called believer is friends with the world or not. The unsaved person's world is the world God has pressed in on them to leave. If a Christian is running into this place, why would the unsaved person want to be delivered from it? They ultimately see that the Christian is working at becoming a friend of what they have grown to hate. Well, what kind of gospel is that?

What good is there if a person (a so-called Christian) claims to have faith, but his faith is not backed by fruit? How can one be certain in Divine Truth? What is the evidence of pure and interactive faith? Faith, to some, is an intellectual assent to a religious belief system that mocks God. Is there a litmus test to find such pure faith? Could “good works” be the true and living proof of faith parted from heaven? Can a true Christian be a product of false faith?

Authentic Christianity is backed by miraculous works of Christ, which refuse to compromise. A person of compromise is functioning much like a person who is independent – “living death.” The real question needing to be asked is that of independence. Since faith independent of the miraculous manifestations of Christ (Christ’s works) is dead, could it be true that a person suffering with a compromising and independent spirit is revealing a “false faith?” Independent people cause suffering in the hearts of their loved ones because they will not allow anyone to get in the way of their independence. This is why it is easy for them to compromise. People of independence find shelter and refuge in a walled fortress and refuse to let others get close to them. They find it impossible to embrace intimacy. In fact, they find more intimacy in swinging the next “deal.” They tend to believe that their faith is a personal and private matter. From what we discover in the Scriptures, this is opposite of true Christianity. Even demons believe in Divine Truth, but their independence denies them Christ (James 2:19).

Could it be true that compromise along with independence is the evidence of false faith? Anyone who uses his intellectual assents, “fact faith”, to prove his dedication to truth, might be in a position of mockery. But those who show their faith by the miraculous works of Christ in their day-to-day living are confessing true Salvation. If the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” is the homeland of the enemy, would it be safe to say that one of his goals is to deceive man into believing that faith is an intellectual assent? Maybe the term “intellectual assent” is too offensive? What about the knowledge of truth without the burden of proof – God’s miraculous work?

Compromising people are known for justifying their actions. Justification is the act of bringing out righteousness or overlooking one’s wrongs. If a person functions in a faith replicating true faith, he is demonstrating the act of bringing out his own righteousness and overlooking his own wrongs. The true test of self-justification is this: when we confront someone who has compromised, he will be quick to bear for himself internal condemnation and self-judgment – while giving the appearance of being right. If pushed, he will punish, chastise, and work to make others feel lesser than himself. A person of compromise usually suffers with a lifestyle of guilt and hidden condemnation. He has moments of truth (versus a life of truth). He lies, covers up, and deceives others into thinking he is doing well. Yet all the while, he is falling into a dark hole of self-judgment, typically resulting in a bad reputation.

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