



World Christian Fellowship

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Integrity- Fear of God.

2 Corinthians 5:11-15, *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. ¹²For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. ¹³For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. ¹⁴For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*

Integrity meaning:

Quality of being undivided,

Quality of being undivided.

Quality of being true to one's ethical standards.

Synonyms are honesty, sincerity, incorruptibility.

It refers to or describes a person who is without any hypocrisy, duplicity. Someone who is completely, in every aspect of life, consistent with his or her stated convictions.

It is the opposite of a hypocrite.

A person who lacks integrity, a person who says one thing and does another is called a hypocrite.

Integrity in the churches is absolutely crucial.

In the ministry, in the life of the pastor, the servant of God, the evangelist, the spiritual leader because he must maintain integrity to have credibility to set the example for all to follow.

Yet, there are many in spiritual leadership, and there always have been, who lack integrity.

Jesus blasted the scribes and Pharisees in **Matthew chapter 23**.

Jesus revealed and condemned their hypocrisy.

Matthew 23:3, *Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.*

The whole chapter is an amazing rebuke of people in spiritual leadership who lack integrity.

God cursing people in spiritual leadership who do not have integrity, who do not live the truth that they proclaim.

Why integrity is significant?

God promises blessing to a man of integrity.

When Solomon finished building the house of the Lord and the king's house, the palace and all that he had desired to do.

1 Kings 9:2-4, that the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. ³And the Lord said to him: "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. ⁴Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments,

God says if you maintain a life of integrity, I will bless you.

On the other hand, if you are in spiritual leadership and you do not and are a hypocrite, I will pronounce a curse on you.

Job:

Job 1:1, *There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.*

He was a noble and godly man. Satan came to God and wanted to show that he could destroy the faith of a man. God said you have My permission. You can attack Job and you will see the continuity and the strength of true saving faith.

Satan went after Job and brought devastation and destruction into his life. His animals were killed. His family was killed. Horrible things happened. Job lost everything.

Job 2:3, *Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."*

Unbelievable horrors came into that man's life and he never let go of his integrity. Never.

Everybody was trying to attack Job's integrity, even his own wife. He would not budge.

Job 2:9, *Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"*

Job 27:3-5, *As long as my breath is in me, And the breath of God in my nostrils, ⁴My lips will not speak wickedness, Nor my tongue utter deceit. ⁵Far be it from me That I should say you are right; Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.*

He would not agree with his carping critics who wanted to have him do what his wife said, curse God. He would not listen to the bitterness in his own soul at the death of his family.

David.

David's life didn't start out that way but after all kinds of lessons by God's chastening, David eventually became a man of great integrity.

Psalm 25:21, *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for You.*

Psalm 41:12, *As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, And set me before Your face forever.*

By the grace of God and by the strength of God he had maintained a life of integrity.

Psalm 78:70-72, *He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹From following the ewes that had young He brought him, To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His*

inheritance. ⁷²So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

God chose David to shepherd, picked him up out of his shepherding and his time with the ewes and their suckling lambs and caring for the flock, and He brought him over to shepherd Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance.

Skill and integrity. Shepherding God's people, of all possible duties, certainly requires integrity.

To preach the truth demands that one live the truth.

To call other people to follow the truth demands that one obey the truth. And that alone makes a ministry what it ought to be. That makes it God-honouring, Christ-exalting and Holy Spirit empowered.

The people of God expect to be ministered to by men of integrity. The church has every right to expect to be ministered to by men who live what they preach. Integrity in spiritual leaders, pastors, preachers, evangelists is the crucial thing.

A man without it is a hypocrite. He is a tomb painted white.

So, for the man who serves the Lord a reputation of integrity, honesty, sincerity is crucial so that he can rightly represent the Lord and the truth.

Corinthian Church:

The false teachers if they were going to be able to tear that Corinthian church away from the truth and get it to listen to error, they had to do one thing. That was they had to destroy the integrity of Paul.

They had to get the people to lose confidence in him because he was their teacher and they wanted to teach other than what he had taught them.

They were bringing in error, they were bringing in teaching that was not true but false. Massive assault on the integrity of the apostle Paul was orchestrated by these false teachers who had come to Corinth.

Demon-possessed person who was leading the false teachers. They were so effective that they had convinced many of the people in the Corinthian congregation that Paul was not a man of honesty, sincerity, genuineness, and integrity.

Once they had destroyed Paul's integrity, they could then replace him as the teachers. Dethroning Paul was the issue

and doing that by the destruction of his integrity was the most efficient means.

On the other hand, as soon as Paul's integrity was gone, so was his usefulness. As soon as his usefulness was gone, so was his fruitfulness. As soon as his fruitfulness was gone, so was his ability to serve his Lord.

So, it was very important to Paul to maintain his integrity. Not for his sake, but for God's sake and the sake of the church and the sake of the witness of the church to the lost, for everybody but his sake.

It is essential to Paul that his people trust him as a man of integrity, a man who was in his conduct, who did in his actions what was absolutely consistent with what he said.

All through this epistle he has to humbly defend the assaults on his integrity, intended to destroy his credibility, dethrone him so the false teachers can replace him and teach their lying heresies.

False teachers still do that. They will find anybody who teaches the truth and assault and attack and try to destroy the credibility of those who teach the truth.

The great apostle knows that essential to his ministry is his integrity. That has to be preserved at all costs. He wants a ministry of integrity.

V 11, *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.*

Here it is not the gospel that is at issue.

This epistle is not evangelistic. He is not concerned to persuade men at Corinth about the gospel, he is concerned to persuade them about his integrity.

Paul wants them to know that he is genuine.

God knows me, I am manifest to Him. He knows me, He knows my heart, He knows my integrity.

What I am concerned about is that you know it as God knows it.

We are revealed to God. Our true spiritual condition God knows, and He knows perfectly.

God knows my sincerity, He knows my honesty, He knows my genuineness. He knows whether I have integrity or not.

2 Corinthians 1:12, *For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.*

That was so important to Paul that he have a clear conscience.

Acts 23:1, *Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."*

"Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

He was like Job. He would not abandon his integrity.

Acts 24:16, *This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

God knows me and I want men to know me and I maintain a blameless conscience.

V 11, *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.*

Mine is clear. God knows the truth. I want you to know it. I hope we are made manifest also in your consciences.

Are you listening to your conscience or are you listening to the critics?

Paul says that you know me.

You know my life. **18 Months** I was there. We walked, we talked, we ate, we slept together, we worked together with our hands. We travelled together.

I taught you. My heart was wide open, you saw everything about my life. I was never alone.

My sincerity was manifest. You saw my godly life. You saw the impeccability of my moral character. You had a first-hand experience. That experience should be enough to inform your conscience.

Conscience only responds to what you know. You know enough that your conscience would understand. We should be manifest to your conscience.

You should be saying, “Wait a minute, don’t you be criticizing Paul, I know that man and my conscience tells me that man is a man of God.”

Nothing is as heart-breaking for a man of integrity as to have those people who know him best listen to the critics and agree with them. That is heart-breaking.

When those whose conscience has been well informed by what they know to be true about you, not listening to that conscience but listening to the critics. Paul says I want you to listen to your conscience, not the critics.

And you know, and you know deep down what God knows, that I am a man who serves God with a single-minded heart.

What good is it going to be for me to now tell you that you should see me as a man of integrity?

There's nothing else I can say.

I am not going to commend myself to you again.

I can't give you any more information than you already have.

So much is at stake and it's not personal.

Reverence for the Lord.

V 11, Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

What do you mean by fear?

Proverbs 9:10, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Acts 9:31, *Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.*

The word “fear” means worship, reverence.

2 Corinthians 7:1, *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Fear is being committed to the glory of God, adoring God, reverencing God, worshiping God, extolling God, exalting God, admiring God, respecting God, holding God in awe to the degree that you pursue holiness, and you pursue service.

The reason I want to persuade you about my integrity is because my heart reverences God, and I don't want to bring any dishonour to His name.

What is most disconcerting is that somebody might think that you misrepresent God? That is deeply disturbing.

That is what deeply disturbed Paul.

It's not that you are being afraid of God.

It is that you reverence God.

Paul knows that God is worthy of his best,

God is worthy of holiness,

God is worthy of his service,

God is worthy of all his efforts,

God is worthy of his fruitfulness.

Paul knows God and he adores God.

Paul is in awe of God.

Paul reverences God and he wants to live his life for God.

Paul wants to bring honour to God's name. Anybody who destroys his integrity causes him to be unable to do that because he's thought of as one who dishonours God.

1 Timothy 1:17, *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Paul knew his God. He knew the attributes of his God. He knew what his God was like. He knew He was worthy of glory, worthy of honour, worthy of praise and most worthy of service.

God was so glorious He deserved his service.

He was the opposite of an Old Testament **prophet Jonah**.

Jonah 1:1-2, *Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.”*

Jonah is an evangelist. His job is to go places and preach about the true God and call people to repentance.

So, God comes to him and says Nineveh’s in bad shape. It’s a wicked, wretched, vile pagan city. I want you to go there and preach.

Now, you would think that an evangelist would say, “that’s great. If God’s calling me, then God’s going to open the door, we are going to have a great time, I am going.”

Jonah knows what kind of God.

Jonah 4:2, *So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious*

and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

Not Jonah. He went the other direction.

He got on a boat and went west instead of east to Tarshish, trying to run from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah got in a big storm, and he got thrown in and this big fish swallowed him and floated around with him for three days and three nights and then vomited him up on the shore.

Finally, he wiped himself off and said, “I think I better go to Nineveh.” He goes to Nineveh, and he preaches. When he preaches at Nineveh, the whole town, the whole city repents. The whole place repents. That’s an evangelist’s dream.

Response from Jonah?

Jonah 4:1, *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.*

He was really mad.

Do you know why?

He was a racist.

He hated Gentiles.

The idea that Gentiles would get in on the covenant just was more than he could stomach. He couldn’t stand the fact that Gentiles would horn in on his Jehovah.

Then Jonah prays to the Lord and listen to this prayer. “Please, Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country?” I knew you would do this, didn’t I tell You? You would do this? I knew it. That’s exactly why I didn’t go, I knew You would save those Gentiles. I knew it. It really ticks me off. I knew it.

Jonah knew his God.

Jonah knew God was gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abundant in loving kindness and who relents concerning calamity. He knew his God well, but somehow it got convoluted and instead of knowing your God and being anxious to serve Him, he knew his God so well he wanted to run from Him.

What a perverted perspective?

Paul said I know You are a God of grace, a God of compassion. I know You are a God who relents concerning calamity or judgment.

I know You are a God of forgiveness.

I don’t want to run, I want to go and I want to preach.

I want to preach the God who is the Saviour of all men, especially those who believe.

He was different than Jonah.

Paul wanted to go.

It was so important to Paul because he was such a true worshiper that he would be able to worship God with a life of service.

This attack on his integrity was threatening his ability to serve God.

Threatening his ability to teach and preach and be believable.

Romans 12:1, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

This sums up his whole life!

He gave everything to God as a spiritual act of worship.

His fear of God, his awe of God, his reverence of God caused him to lift up his whole life and offer it to God.

For somebody to debilitate him from doing that, for somebody to steal his ministry, to steal his opportunity, to rob him of his service because his integrity was destroyed was not acceptable to him.

He defended his integrity because of his reverence for the Lord.

He wanted to serve Him as effectively as he could.
He wanted nothing to undermine that service.

V 10, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Paul would stand before that judgment seat and he would be rewarded for that service that he rendered to his Lord.
If his reputation was ruined, so was his usefulness.
If his usefulness was ruined, so was his opportunity.
If his opportunity was ruined, so was his fruitfulness.
If his fruitfulness was ruined, he had no reason to live.

He only wanted to honour God with a life of service.
Paul is defending himself, not for his sake but for God's sake.