

BEING RIGHTEOUS IN A SINFUL WORLD

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As we go through our daily lives, Christians are bombarded with images and words that cut at the very core of what we know as Christian culture. It may be in the checkout line at the supermarket, a billboard on the interstate, or the sidewalk at a newsstand, where we come into contact with these images. There is no doubt that the very culture in which we live is changing at a rapid pace and not for the better. There are those who desire a change in the direction of our nation, culturally speaking, and the sooner the better. To have a destructive effect, it does not have to be a “hot topic” like homosexuality, or the Bible’s distinct rebuke concerning it (Rom. 1:26-28), but simply any subject that can aide in the destruction of our Christian culture. The fact that God condemns those that support ideals that are destructive to His cause (Rom. 1:32), should be reason enough for us to avoid anything that will entice us to step a little farther from the Father. The question we must all ask ourselves is, “How does one live righteously in a culture gone wrong?” Understanding that we live “by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), we must turn to the pages of the Bible for the answer.

The Holy Spirit, through the pen of Job, instructs us in how to answer the above question. Job was a man who did live righteously in a culture gone wrong: he eschewed evil in a culture that embraced it! He is described in the first verse in this manner, “...and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). In His conversation with Satan, the Holy Father asked, “Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8). It is clear that Job is a perfect example of how we should behave in a culture that embraces evil.

Regarding Job’s description, the text does not indicate sinless perfection, but maturity as a child of God. One might say that Job was steadfast in his life and his faith, but how can people today benefit from Job’s steadfastness?

We must be willing to change when we discover there is something wrong in our lives, according to God’s standards. Paul said, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). Godly sorrow, which results in true repentance, is the very emotion that makes an individual sorry that he or she has been involved in anything of which God disapproves, or that he or she has not done something that should have been done. However, Paul mentions two types of sorrow. The other one is worldly sorrow which makes a person sorry that he or she was caught doing something that was wrong. An example of this type of sorrow can be seen in King Saul after he refused to utterly destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:26). He tried to present himself as being truly sorry but God and Samuel would not be fooled!

Peter is the perfect example of what godly sorrow truly is. After he had denied the Lord three times and heard the cock crow, Jesus turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:60-61). At that point, Luke records, “And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). The difference between the two is that Peter could have simply left the situation; after all, the Lord was going to the Cross. Instead, he repented and continued to do what was right in a culture that did wrong!

Though he knew he was righteous, Job was willing to change if he needed to do so. In answering Bildad, he said, “Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge” (Job 9:15). He would not have questioned God, but simply would have

humbly entreated Him as his Judge and acted accordingly. What a difference could be seen in our culture if people would simply entreat God as the Ruler of the world and abide by His laws!

It must be realized that all sin is a sin against God whether committed against another or not. David understood his adultery was a sin against God even though Uriah was murdered as a result. He told Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Sam. 12:13). The prodigal son also realized that when he said, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:21). Eschewing evil in a culture that embraces it requires that we become steadfast and always have the willingness to repent and change.

The mind has to be trained properly before one can be steadfast who endeavors to live right in a culture gone wrong. Training of the mind begins by donning the armor of God. After Paul admonished the Ephesian brethren to behave properly in their relationships with parent to child, child to parent, servant to master, and master to servant, he went on to how we were to wear the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-17). That is the description of a steadfast Christian prepared to fight against Satan and sin!

Christians can expect impurity and evil to always exist as long as the world stands, but one day the Lord will return, and all the things that the world has to offer will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10). As God's people strive to live righteously in the world, they must have the courage of which Solomon spoke (Pro. 28:1), the conviction Vashti demonstrated before the king of Persia and his princes (Est. 1:11-12), and the commitment that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had shown before Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (Dan. 3:16-18). All these characteristics can be seen in Job, as he was righteous in a sinful world!