

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

Church of Christ
371 W. Main Street
Greenwood, IN 46142
(317)888-8288

www.churchofchristatgreenwood.org

VOLUME 8 NO. 35

October 30, 2011

The Foundation of Spirituality – Honesty

by Larry Rouse

Why does the preaching of the gospel seem not to be effective in our society today? We know that God's word has not changed, nor has its power (**Rom 1:16**). We are assured by God that His word will never return to Him void, but it will always accomplish the purpose for which He sent it (**Isa 55:11**). Today, with this present generation, as it has in past generations, the word of God is able to expose hearts and allow men to choose light or darkness (**Jn 3:19-21**). This choice depends upon the kind of heart a man possesses.

When Jesus described the kind of heart in which the word of God would be received and would prosper, He described it as "good and honest" (**Lk 8:15 KJV**). Will a man choose light or darkness, honesty or dishonesty? If a man decides that he "hates the light" then God will let him "believe a

lie" and will not do anything further other than the presentation of His word (**2 Thess 2:10-11**).

We must fight the temptation to be dishonest

The battle for honesty lasts a lifetime. God emphatically warns the Christian to guard his heart and to keep it pure. "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds" (**Col 3:9**). God has plainly told us: "He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence" (**Psa 101:7**).

The nature of man has not changed. Without continual exposure to the word of God, men's hearts will be pulled back to self-justification and blindness (**Prov 16:2; Jer 17:10-11**). Why do men prefer dishonesty? Psychologists suggest that men tend to make up the reasons for their behaviors *after* they do them, and that their "reasons" and behavior usually have nothing to do with each other.

2

King Saul was a prime example of a good man who gave in to dishonesty to his own destruction. Do you remember the various explanations that he made to Samuel when he was confronted about his direct disobedience to God's command (**1 Sam 15:3, 15, 20-21**)? "I was going to sacrifice them! No, wait, it was the people that did it!" Finally, after a spiritual wrestling match, Saul admits his sin, but without true repentance! Saul thought that his outward confession without a changed heart would put him right with God. In this he had deceived himself! This pattern would remain throughout Saul's life.

We must recognize dishonesty

God's love will lead us to look to the good in others. Indeed, we want to believe the best about others and not be quick to judge another's actions without sufficient evidence. Nonetheless, the Bible is filled with warnings concerning those who would deliberately mislead us and the kind of tactics they will use to accomplish this task. "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of

deceitful plotting" (**Eph 4:14**). "These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage" (**Jude 16**).

It is a difficult thing for good and honest Christians to see the deceit and manipulation from those who have a hidden agenda to pull others into their circle. Flattery is first used to gain a closer association and trust. Then lies are told in secret to inflame emotions and close minds (**Prov 18:19**). Finally, these men succeed in having their new disciples cut off association with their former brethren without so much as talking about these newly discovered "differences" over an open Bible (**Gal 4:16-17**).

A commitment to honesty will keep us from these "closed door decisions" that result in one "cutting and running." Instead we will openly discuss and test those who have beliefs that they say are of God (**1 Jn 4:1**). Also, we will not accept testimony about the personal actions of another without first giving that person a chance to defend himself (**Prov 18:17; Mt 18:15-17**)!

Pride always leads to dishonesty

Those who do not know God cannot stand to look at themselves honestly. The driving force behind pride is the desire to be recognized and have praise because we wish to appear to be something that we are not. "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (**Gal 6:3**). Those that follow this path must wear a mask. They must fight to "keep up appearances" and work to tear others down so that they can receive this vain and temporary recognition of men. There is a better way to live your life!

God's forgiveness allows us to be honest

God sees me as I am, and, in spite of that, He loves me and seeks my best. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (**Rom 5:8**). God sees the darkness of my sin and has provided a sacrifice that will wash away my sins and restore my relationship with Him (**Rom 3:23; 6:23**). What do I need to do? I need to be honest! I must see my own sin and make no excuses. The love of God must

move me to change my heart in repentance that will result in a changed life. I then will take the final step in water baptism, yielding my body to a burial and resurrection like the Lord's (**Rom 6:3-5**). I now am the Lord's, not because I am perfect, but because I am forgiven and have yielded my heart to Him (**Acts 2:38-39**).

The Christian life is characterized by the forgiveness of God. Rather than run from my shortcomings, I can now run to God for a greater sight and to seek His help in growing to be something more in His service. I come to love the truth, to love bold and honest preaching because it allows me to see what God already sees and what I need to know. Most of all, I am thankful that God's word is able to penetrate my heart when it drifts into dishonesty and point me back to Him. "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 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 4:12-13**).

Be honest. Are you genuinely serving the Lord with all of your heart (**2 Cor 13:5**)?

"He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy" (**Prov 28:13**).

Who Ever Heard Of A Man . . .

Who preferred to drown rather than get into a boat with a hypocrite? Who quit going to the movies because the manager did not speak to him? Who always quit on the second day of the job because he made a mistake on the first? Who never did anything about his illness because he wasn't interested in the subject? Who refused to eat because he didn't understand how it could give him physical strength? Who was too busy to breathe? Who never made any kind of promise to anyone because he was "afraid he couldn't hold out?" Who scorned a personal invitation to have an audience with the President of the United States because he would have to give up some of his friends? Who refused to obey the law of the nation because it might upset his family members?

Who failed to improve himself because someone might laugh at him? IN THE WORLD . NEVER! IN RELIGION . . OFTEN!

Author Unknown