

ONE BIG WORD TO GET GODS APPROVAL

Like Abe's mother taught him, there are some big words that perhaps our own mothers taught us to live by.....faith, love, honesty, respect, and the one word I want to talk about today ... integrity. There is a short two sentences I came across that concerns just that.

Son, I don't have much to give you as you leave for college. But I do have a GOOD NAME, so don't mess it up. Those wise words were spoken by a father to his son after he graduated from David Mackenzie High School in 1990. A "good name" is absolutely vital for Christians as our name represents to others our life in Christ. Paul, speaking to the Colossians, Chapter 3 *Therefore, as Gods chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. And be thankful.* Those words should remind us who it is our good name represents. As Paul tells, we are CHOSEN and should show compassion humility, kindness. Just like that man told his son going to college ,, Paul tells us "don't mess up my good name".

Our "name" ,.....my "name" . Are we known as different names in different places we go? That could be our reputation. In Brookville Pa. where my parents lived I was "Jim and Dorothy's son". .At my last job I was known as "church boy". My father was known as "the piano player". My wife is the "quilt maker". But should our reputation change depending on where we may be or who we may be with? Those are names someone may give us. Someone once said that we go through our lives with three names. First, the names our parents give us. Second, the names that others give us (our reputation) . And third , the name we may give ourselves. (our character). Those names that others give us are DEFINITELY important. In Proverbs 22:1 it says...*A good name is more desirable than great riches. To be esteemed is better than silver or gold.* But which name is more important? Reputation or character? Our reputation is based on what we let people see and they form an opinion. But our character,, our character should have INTEGRITY. And hopefully our reputation also has that same INTEGRITY.

And the word integrity. It is used in the entire Bible in only 16 verses. 16 times just doesn't seem like a lot that would make it an important quality. The Hebrew word is TANIM. which translates **wholesome , uprightness, and blameless.** Perhaps the easy definition— —do the right thing. Now, Christianity according to Dale. God makes demands on all of us. One of the things He demands is our loyalty. He wants us to put Him before all else. If

we live a life like that, what do we get in return? And do we put God first for a reward or just because we want to? Just because we have our own INTEGRITY?.

2nd Samuel 22:21 The Lord has DEALT with me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands.

Then just 4 verses farther, 2nd Samuel 22:25 The Lord has REWARDED me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His sight.

So we are first dealt with by God and then we get rewarded by God for our cleanness and righteousness. Verse 26 then says To the faithful, Lord, You show Yourself faithful. To those with integrity You show integrity.

1st Chronicles 20:17 I know my God that you examine our hearts and rejoice when You find integrity there. So we please God and make Him rejoice when we show or have integrity. And pleasing God is a reward of its own. (THE LORD HAS REWARDED ME) **from verses 25 2nd Samuel**

Who in the Bible showed integrity?? God singled out Job as an ideal example of a man with "IT". In The Book of Job 2:3 Then the Lord asked Satan. "have you considered my servant Job? He is the finest man of all the earth. He is blameless, a man of fine integrity. And he has kept his integrity even though you urged Me to harm him without cause.". Job did not ever turn his back on God through ALL of his troubles and trials. His integrity never faltered. In Job 31:6 Let me be weighed by God in an even balance and He will know my integrity. Let me be weighed by God and He will know my integrity. Can I myself confidently say that? That's my goal in my Christian walk. That God will know my integrity, my righteousness.

Psalms 25:21 David speaking to God . May my integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope Lord is in you. May my integrity protect me ?? How do we get protected? Because God cherishes and rewards integrity, thus having it will protect us as our reward.

Our integrity does not get us salvation, but it brings God's approval. Psalm 26:1 Again a Psalm of David. *Vindicate me Lord and declare me innocent for I have acted with integrity. I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Put me on trial Lord and examine my heart and my mind. For I am always aware of Your unfailing Love.* Inviting God to examine our heart and our mind. Go ahead God look deep into my thoughts. Deep into my heart. Like Job saying to "weigh my integrity". Scary in a way. But should it be?

One of the things we can control is our character. With God's help that we ask for we can live and act with integrity. Psalm 101:2 *I will be careful to lead a blameless life. I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart.* And remember, one of the Hebrew translations of integrity is BLAMELESS.

We should take the Bible and its teachings and cling to them. And get rewarded with God's love and guidance. Going into the New Testament in Luke 8:15 . The parable of the four soils. *But the seed on good soil stands for those with a good and noble heart, who hear the word, retain it, and through patience produce a good crop.*

And produce a good crop? What does that mean? Taking the word and telling others? Living a Godly life of our own? But the two sayings I associate with integrity. **A man's word is his bond.//// Actions speak louder than words.** And Apostle Paul, who I consider a great teacher and a man of great integrity himself. We often think of Paul teaching Timothy but listen to what he taught Titus about being a man and a teacher. The Book of Titus Chapter 2 : 6-8 *Encourage the young men to be self controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about you.* Imagine living a life where no-one could find anything bad to say about us. Would that be blameless? Would that be integrity? Imagine our enemy

being ashamed about not having any bad things to say about our character and our integrity? Not having anything bad to say about our name as a child of God.

So through our character part of our three names we must show our reputation to be one with integrity. To say that guy over there or that lady over there represents what a real Christian should be. Can I say “PUT ME ON TRIAL LORD. EXAMINE MY HEART AND MY MIND”? Whew, I say that is a big test that I hope I can pass. Just don't look too close God. Looking in that mirror thing. *when you get what you want in your struggle for self but the world seems to turn you away. just go to the mirror and look at yourself and see what that man has to say.* Perhaps when we are looking in a mirror (honestly) that is the same view God has of us. Now 2 stories I came across of how God works in our lives perhaps at times turning evil into good, Building integrity in us. Living a life where we just simply — —do the right thing.

The gangster, Al Capone owned virtually all of Chicago in the 1920s. Capone's lawyer nicknamed “Easy Eddie” promoted Capone's criminal empire. Easy Eddie's skills as a lawyer kept Al Capone out of the prison sentences that he deserved. Capone showered Easy Eddie with great wealth for doing that. Easy Eddie had every luxury available. His estate filled an entire city block. Eddie ignored being involved in evil because of the lifestyle it afforded. His heart was hard, except for Eddie's one soft spot — his three children and especially his one son who he loved completely. He wanted his son to have every advantage that he himself didn't have while growing up. Despite everything he had was the **FRUIT** of crime (PRODUCE A GOOD CROP), Eddie attempted to teach his children morals. Eddie wanted them to be more honorable than himself. But with all of his influence and wealth, there were two things Eddie couldn't pass on to his kids — his example and his good name. (BUT NOW HOW GOD WORKS IN OUR LIVES) A Bible found its way into Eddie's hands one day and he read and was faced with the question, **For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?** That question provoked Eddie. He began to change. He started taking his wife and kids to church where he gave his life to God. God was working in his life. Easy Eddie chose to make his wrongs right. Eddie tried to clean up his name by telling the police the truth about Al Capone. That required Easy Eddie to testify in court against Capone and his organized crime syndicate. Turn over evidence. Eddie testified, Capone went to jail, but within a year, the mob murdered Easy Eddie. He died after a tremendous flash of gunfire on a desolate Chicago street. But his life was not in vain. He had found God and had taught his children that message.

He had given riches to them worth more than an estate. *Proverbs 22 A good name is better than silver and gold.* Eddie passed on God's word and had become a man of integrity. God can find good in all of us and remove the evilness.

Story Two – Butch O'Hare

World War II revealed many heroes. One was a fighter pilot named Butch O'Hare. His hero story started after he was airborne with the rest of his squadron on a bombing mission in the South Pacific. Butch looked at his fuel gauge and, to his surprise, saw that the ground crew had not refilled his fuel tank. So Butch would not have enough fuel to complete the mission. Butch's commander ordered him to return to the ship immediately. As Butch returned, he saw a sight that turned his blood cold. An enemy squadron was racing to the American ships. So Butch decided there was only one thing he could do — divert the enemy. Ignoring his safety, he plunged into the Japanese formation, firing his guns as he surprised the enemy planes. The Japanese airplanes fired on him from all angles with their machine guns but he just kept moving. Alone, he shot down 5 of the 7 Japanese planes. and the other 2 flew back. He then returned to the carrier. Once he landed, Butch told of his adventure. And the movie from his gun-camera told the tale. Butch was the Navy's first flying hero of World War II. He was the first Naval Aviator to win the Congressional Medal of Honor given to him by FDR. And Butch's hometown, being proud of their hero named O'Hare Airport in Chicago after him. Integrity.....doing the right thing.

What do these two stories have in common?

Butch O'Hare was "Easy Eddie's" son. Easy Eddie didn't just give Butch the lesson of integrity. He taught him Christianity. He gave him a GOOD NAME. That's the way integrity works. Easy Eddie O'Hare understood that he had to SHOW Butch good Christian morals instead of just talking about it. "Honesty" is what you say. "Integrity" is how you prove it. It is action-oriented, not word-oriented. Eddie learned Biblical integrity and showed integrity despite the probable outcome of death. That integrity inspired his son to do the same thing. Integrity should be contagious and passed around. Perhaps that is what "produce a good crop" means.

And then again one of the men with the greatest integrity stories. JOB. He has been through rough times that is for sure. His friends have been ridiculing him, questioning him, testing his faith and Satan has been busy too. But Job's final words to his friends. Chapter 27. *As surely as God lives who has denied me justice, the Almighty who has made my life bitter, as long as I have life in me, the breath of God in my*

nostrils, my lips will not say anything wicked, and my tongue will not utter lies. I will never admit that you are right until I die. I will not deny my INTEGRITY I will maintain my innocence and never let go of it. my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live. JOB...A man of great integrity. He was put through severe troubles and losses but never wavered with his integrity.

So let us pursue integrity, maintain our uprightness. Let us give to others and show to others our "good name" of being God's child. Let us be blameless. Being a Christian may not always be easy. Being people of integrity may not always be easy. But God's rewards to us are a most awesome reward. And we all know that most popular verse in the Bible ...John 3:16. But there is another 3:16 that humbles me. One of the last verses of the Old Testament is Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other and the Lord listened and heard...A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence, concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name. and here is the good part "On the day that I act" says the Lord "those on the scroll will be my **TREASURED POSSESSIONS** and I will spare them just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him." So we live a life of blameless integrity and righteousness and we talk to others about Jesus.....and we become God's **TREASURED POSSESSION!!!** What a great reward.

And by the way, I started this message with that father telling his son I have nothing to give you **except my good name** as you leave for college. The father's name was Johnnie and the son had a name we all know....Jerome. Their good name?. BETTIS. And our good name ? God's children- His chosen people the ones on the scroll. Having Godly integrity won't mess that up either. AMEN.

BENEDICTION

Colossians 3:16-17 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the NAME of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. AMEN AND GOD BLESS.