**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Marks of Great Character (Part 1)**

Someone has said, “A good way to judge the character of a person is to observe what they do with a shopping cart after their load has been placed into their car.” Little decisions like that do say something about our character. “You can judge the character of a person by what he does when the store clerk gives him ten cents too much change.” We may consider these matters of insignificance, but they do say something about who we really are.

Today on our program and next week, the Lord willing, we want to talk about marks of a great character, marks of a character that pleases God. But I want us to understand that we are talking about CHARACTER, NOT REPUTATION. These are two different things. Reputation is what others think of you. Character is what you really are. A good reputation is wonderful. It is something we should strive for. Proverbs 22:1 says, *“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.”* To have the kind of name that when it is spoken it brings to peoples’ minds honesty, integrity, goodness. That is indeed wonderful. But the primary focus of our life is to build a great character -- the kind of character that pleases God. And if we will build for ourselves a character that pleases God, then our reputation will take its place in our lives. But to try to build a good reputation without the accompanying character is called hypocrisy.

Now let’s talk about some marks of great character.

First of all, a person is of great character when he is just as concerned about doing right when he is all alone, as he is when he is in the presence of others. When you are all alone and temptation comes your way, and no one will know whether you gave into the temptation or not, what do you do? What you do is a major test of character. Someone said of a lady, “If she was in a room all by herself, and a table in that room was filled with 100 dollar bills, and she knew that no one would know if she took one of those bills, she would absolutely not take a one.” That is an indication of good character, and we might say, “neither would I take one.”

While we may not take money off the table, there may be other sins we do when we know no one is looking. Think about king David. He may not would have taken money from someone, and yet he would lust after Bathsheba, another man’s wife, and commit adultery with her when others did not know what he was doing. On the other hand, Judas Iscariot might not be tempted to commit adultery, but that 100 dollar bill would be a great temptation to Judas.

We all have our weaknesses. When I am tempted in the area of my weakness, and I know no one will see, what do I do? This is a major test of my character.

When God gave the children of Israel the city of Jericho he told them not to take of the silver and gold, and of the vessels of bronze and iron from the city. They were consecrated to the Lord. But Achan coveted a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, took them from the city, and hid them. He was thinking no one will know. Achan was a man of weak character.

What is the solution to this problem? The solution is GODLINESS. Godliness is one of the qualities we are to add to our faith, Peter says in 2 Peter 1:5-6. W. E. Vine defines “godliness”: “…denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is well-pleasing to Him.” Godliness, then begins with a Godward attitude, and from that Godward attitude proceeds conduct pleasing to God. One with a Godward attitude is aware of God throughout the day. There is a consciousness of God. The godly person is always aware of the fact that God knows his every thought and sees his every action, and that God evaluates all that he does. He is fully convinced of what the Hebrew writer says, *“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. 4:13). God saw David’s adultery. God saw Judas make a deal with the chief priests about betraying Jesus for money. God saw Achan take the garment, the silver and the gold.

And God sees whatever we do whether it is seen by man or not. And so, godliness, our consciousness of God, and our desire to please God is the answer or solution to our problem when tempted to do something when no one will know.

And also, do I DO what is right when no one will see me do it? Do I pray when I know no one else will know? Do I read my Bible when I know no one else will know what I am doing? Do I faithfully attend services of the church when I’m away from home and I know no one back home will know whether I attend or not? The Godly person does it because he knows that it pleases God. Doing what is right, even when no one knows, is a mark of great character, a character that pleases God.

Secondly, a person is of great character when he admits his failures without any alibies or excuses. All of us at times commit sin. Sometimes my sin may be one that has let my family down, or I let my country down, or let the church down. Do I make excuses? Do I offer alibies? Do I put the blame on someone else? This is what some of our politicians and celebrities do. It seems that the accepted way of dealing with accusations of sin today is to lie about it, make excuses for it. Put the blame on someone else. Get a good lawyer so we can beat the rap. The thinking is, “do whatever you can to keep from paying a hefty fine or going to jail.” Is this where we have come to in our country? It’s OK to lie about our crimes if we can get away with it?

Well, there is another choice. We can say, “I have sinned. I am guilty. I have no one else to blame but myself. I am responsible for my own conduct. I am willing to accept whatever the consequences of my actions may be. Will you please forgive me?” This is how a person of great character handles his sin. This is how a person who wants to please God deals with his sin.

King David, who committed adultery and murder, did try to hide his sins for a while, but eventually he dealt with his sin in the right way. He admitted his sins, repented of them, and sought God’s forgiveness. 2 Sam. 12:13 says, *“So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’”*  Psalm 51 was written by David after he had repented. He says beginning with verse one, *“Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight-That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.”* (Psalm 51:1-4). David does not make any excuses. He does not offer any alibies. He does not blame Bathsheba. He does not get angry with Nathan who brought his sin to his attention.He owns up to his own sin and seeks God’s forgiveness. There were consequences to his sins, and he accepted them without complaining to God. David let his nation down when he committed his sin (he showed little character), but he showed what a man of great character does when he repents.

In contrast to David, consider King Saul. In 1 Samuel 15 God told King Saul to utterly destroy the Amalelites and spare them not. But Saul disobeyed God. He spared the king and the best of the sheep and the oxen. When the prophet Samuel brought this to his attention Saul begin to make excuses and to put the blame on the people. Saul did not genuinely repent of his sins. In verses 26-28, it says, *“But Samuel said to Saul, ‘I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.’ And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, ‘The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.’”* This one that was better than him was King David. David is said to be a man after God’s own heart. Saul was rejected by the Lord from being king. It was not that one committed sin and other did not. They both committed sin. It had to do with their heart. David admitted his sins and genuinely from the heart repented of his sins. Saul did not have that kind of heart. Saul was of weak character, a character that was not pleasing to God.

There may be someone in your family you have sinned against. The relationship is strained. He or she has not acted right either. You think that person needs to come to you and own up to his sins first. You are thinking, he is the problem. What does the person of great character do? What does the person who wants to please God do? He is one who will admit his sins whether the other person does or not. He is one who will own up to his sins in the matter and say, “I’m sorry.” Remember Jesus said, *“Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”* (Matt. 7:5)

It may be there are some in our listening audience who have for some time refused to admit the sins in their own lives. You are thinking it would be too humiliating to admit wrong. But dear listener, that is the only way one can be forgiven of his sins. In Luke 18 Jesus tells the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. They both went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee did not acknowledge any sin in his life, did not seek any forgiveness. But the tax collector would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” Now, it was not that the Pharisee didn’t have any sin. He just refused to acknowledge it. It may be it was too humiliating for him to admit it. But notice what Jesus said concerning these two. He said, *“ I tell you, this man* [talking about the tax collector] *went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* Those who will be justified are those who will humble themselves to admit their sins and seek God’s forgiveness in the way He has commanded.

One who is of great character is one who will admit his sins without any alibies or excuses. He will also be just as concerned about doing right when he is all alone, as he is when he is in the presence of others.

We are talking about marks of great character.

Next week, Lord willing, we want to talk about other marks of great character, a character that pleases God. We hope you will join us then.

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