

Character and Reputation

Introduction

2 Corinthians 8:20-21

1. Character and reputation are not the same thing.
 - A. Our **character** is the combination of our true qualities as a person — while our **reputation** is what others believe we are.
 - B. Character is what you are in the dark.
 - C. “Character is what you know you are, not what others think you are” (Marva Collins).
2. Character and reputation do not always coincide.
 - A. A person’s true character may be better than or worse than outward appearances might suggest to others. With people, there may be more or less than meets the eye!
 - B. All that glitters is not gold.

Matthew 23:27-28 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed **appear beautiful outwardly**, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

- C. All that is gold does not glitter.
 - 1) David was chosen as king at a time when outwardly he did not appear as kingly as his brothers — yet in his character he was a man after God’s own heart.
1 Samuel 13:14; 16:7
3. We need to think as God would have us think about both reputation and character — both our own and that of others.

Maintaining Our Own Reputation

1. To some extent, all of us are concerned about what others think of us.
2. Within proper limits, concern for our reputation is good — the Bible teaches that there is an important sense in which the Christian must attempt to preserve an honorable name.
 - A. We must avoid doing anything that would detract from God's honor and the influence of the gospel.

Romans 2:23-24 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.

1 Timothy 3:7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

1 Timothy 5:14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

1 Timothy 6:1 Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.

Titus 2:10 not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

- B. Sometimes spiritual priorities require us to bend over backwards to avoid even the suspicion of wrongdoing.

2 Corinthians 8:20-21 avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us — providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

- C. No matter how righteously we live, we cannot guarantee ourselves a reputation free of blame, because the devil will trump up charges and misrepresent us if he has to.**

Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."

John 8:48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

- D. But whenever more than one alternative is open to us in the accomplishment of godly goals, we owe it to the Lord and the gospel to choose judiciously the alternative that offers the devil the least occasion for slander.**

- 1) We must avoid unnecessarily giving the Lord's enemies "ammunition."**

Romans 12:17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

1 Peter 2:12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men —

1 Peter 3:16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

- 3. We tend to be too little concerned with our reputation as regards the gospel — and too much concerned with our reputation as regards our selfish pride.**

- A. It is a terrible form of self-centeredness to be always worried what others are thinking about us.**

1 Samuel 18:6-9

Matthew 23:5-7

- B. We would not worry so much what others think about us if we realized how rarely they do! Cf. “You're So Vain” by Carly Simon.**
 - 1) If we are “taking care of our own business,” we will have little time for self-centered worry about whether we have the praise of others.**
- 4. Besides, we need to be more concerned about whether we have the right slant on others, rather than whether they see us as they should.**

Being Careful in Forming Our Opinion of Other People

- 1. There is much that we cannot know about other persons — we need to be very careful in forming our estimate of their character.**
 - A. We must not use carnal criteria in evaluating others.**

2 Corinthians 5:16 Therefore, from now on, **we regard no one according to the flesh.** Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

- B. We must evaluate others using the same standards that we apply to ourselves.**
Matthew 7:1-5

John 7:24 **Do not judge according to appearance,** but judge with righteous judgment."

- 2. Whatever may be another person’s reputation in the minds of others, we owe it to that person to make our own assessment and to make it fairly.**

Building up Our Own Character

1. **As far as our own reputation is concerned, we ought, whenever it lies within our power, to secure one that will help the gospel.**
2. **As far as other people's reputations are concerned, we ought to be as understanding and fair as we can be.**
3. **But whatever attention we need to pay to the subject of reputation, we need to pay all the more attention to the subject of character — particularly the building up of our own character.**
 - A. **This is because our own character is the one thing that we are directly in control of — and it is what we are responsible for!**
 - B. **“There is a broad distinction between character and reputation, for one may be destroyed by slander, while the other can never be harmed except by its possessor. Reputation is in no man's keeping. You and I cannot determine what other men will think and say about us. We can only determine what they ought to think and say about us.” (Source Unknown)**
 - 1) **We need to work at making our character what it ought to be — and not worry so much whether others are adequately appreciating our character.**
 - 2) **We need to be what we want others to think we are.**
4. **We need to teach our children that there is more to being a quality young person than being “popular”**

Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, **to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,**

1 Peter 3:3-4 **Do not let your adornment be merely outward** — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

Conclusion

1. **Whether we are concerned with ourselves or others, we need to remember that outward appearances do not tell the whole story.**
 - A. **There is always more to a human being than meets the eye.**
 - B. **This is vital for the Christian to remember.**
2 Corinthians 6;4-10

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, **yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.**

2. **When we take care of the greater things (like character), God will see that the lesser things (like reputation) work out as they should.**

James 4:10 **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**

