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"Living A Morally Pure Life"

By Jarrod M. Jacobs

I am impressed by the number of occasions when holy men of God stressed the importance of living a life of moral purity and being a good example to others. Their moral behavior showed they were living as they taught others to live.

Two Bible Examples

One example of this is seen in Samuel's discourse to the people after they defeated Nahash the Ammonite (I Sam. 11-12). As the people made their way to Gilgal to celebrate and offer sacrifices, Samuel spoke up. In speaking to them, Samuel asked whether he had ever *"defrauded ... oppressed"* bribed, or in any way cheated them (I Sam. 12:3). The people responded by saying he had never done this (I Sam. 12:4). Therefore, after establishing his uprightness and genuine concern for the nation, he condemned their error. To better appreciate Samuel's questions in verse 3, consider how such condemnation would have been received if the speaker had been one who had continually taken advantage of his position before the people and oppressed them in some way.

Another good example was the apostle, Paul. He told the Ephesian elders, *"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."* (Acts 20:33-35). He wrote something similar to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:10). Paul, like Samuel, understood that an upright, moral life before men helped people accept what they were saying. Samuel and Paul taught by example as well as by words.

Elders And Preachers Need To Be Morally Pure.

It ought not to surprise anyone that elders in a local congregation are expected to be morally upright men. Paul said elders are to be *"of good behavior ... no striker ... not greedy ... patient ... not covetous"* and *"he must have a good report from them which are without"* (I Tim. 3:2-3, 7; Titus 1:7-8). What kind of leadership can a church have when they cannot trust the shepherds to be morally upright?

Preachers need to conduct their lives in a morally upright way as well (I Tim. 5:22). In the same chapter, he told Timothy how he ought to treat older and younger men, older and younger women, and widows (I Tim. 5:1-3). Timothy was told, *"be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (I Tim. 4:12).

All Christians Need To Be Morally Pure.

Let it be understood that the need for upright moral living is for all Christians. Our Lord taught that those who would be a part of His kingdom must be pure in thought and motive as well (Matt. 5:27-29, 37, 38-47). In thinking about good examples of morality, let us remember Tabitha (Dorcas, Acts 9:36-42). This godly woman was *"full of good works and almsdeeds which she did"* (Acts 9:36). After her death, when Peter came to Joppa, the widows showed him *"the coats and garments"* she had made (Acts 9:39). This was a woman full of good works, not merely full of good intentions. If you were to die today, what would people show men that best represented you? What kind of life are we living?

Why Be Morally Pure?

What is the purpose of stressing a good, moral lifestyle? Can one be saved solely by his moral living? By no means (ex: Acts 10:1-6)! Have we thought that living a morally upright life can open doors to teaching? If people know we are upright

and honest in our dealings with them, they may be more apt to listen when we talk with them about the Lord. Yes, they might refuse the gospel, but they will have *"no evil thing to say of you"* (Titus 2:8). The world may not respect God's word, but they have to respect one whose life matches what he teaches. Only God knows the extent of the damage that has been done in this world because of hypocritical Christians who say one thing but do something else. Brethren, let us guard our example and influence! Shelbyville, TN

Am I Like Jonah?

- by Josh McCord

And if we read the book of Jonah carefully, we may discover something uncomfortable: We may be more like Jonah than we think.

Am I like Jonah when I know what God says, but do something else? God's command could not have been clearer: *"Arise, go to Nineveh..."* (Jonah 1:2). Jonah understood exactly what God wanted, but instead of going to Nineveh, *"Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD..."* (Jonah 1:3). His problem was not ignorance; it was a lack of obedience. Are there things that I know God has instructed me to do, but I'm still not doing them?

Am I like Jonah when I run from difficult responsibilities? Nineveh was not where Jonah wanted to go, so he headed in the opposite direction. We may not board a ship for Tarshish, but we can still run from God. We run when we avoid the difficult conversation we know we should have. We run when an opportunity to teach someone the gospel appears and we remain silent. We run when obedience becomes uncomfortable and we begin looking for an easier way.

Am I like Jonah when I care more about my comfort than lost souls? After Jonah finally preached to Nineveh, the people repented. God showed them mercy, and Jonah became angry. Then Jonah sat outside the city, and God caused a plant to grow over him for shade. When God caused the plant to wither, Jonah became upset. God exposed the problem in Jonah's heart. Jonah cared deeply about his own comfort and think so's, but he did not share God's concern for thousands of people who needed mercy. God asked: *"And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city…?"* (Jonah 4:11). What about us? Can we become more upset when something inconveniences us than when someone is spiritually lost? Do we care more about our comfort, schedules, preferences, possessions, and routines than about reaching souls?

It is easy to shake our heads at Jonah. It is much harder to look into the mirror. Before we criticize a prophet who ran from God, became angry over a plant, and struggled to care about Nineveh, each of us should ask: "Am I like Jonah?"