

The Private Challenges

Consistent Character 5

We began this series by making it clear that salvation comes as a result of faith - not religious effort. But we also determined that people of God must be conscientious, scrupulous - that's attentive to details, diligent, and dutiful. This is all a result of understanding what our salvation means - and knowing the One who provides it.

We also agreed that without faith, without coming to know Him, we cannot even begin this journey of Christian character building. Faith is where we begin.

We reminded ourselves that any character we begin to build upon must be kept in perspective. Always seen via the understanding that we are mere earthen vessels He is pleased to use - reflectors of His light. We observed Paul's ministry and saw how he chose to make it all about Christ and counted that which he gained on his own as nothing.

We saw in the day of great challenge how David was unable - and how he and Saul both recognized this. For it was the Lord's battle and the Lord's enabling that were required for victory. We made note that - not only in the big challenges, but all (daily) challenges - it is about His work, through us.

So...after beginning the series insisting that consistent Christian character was about the "whole life" of a believer, we have talked very little about "your" life.

It has been about faith in Him, never in ourselves, reliance upon Him, never upon ourselves. And if that has been made clear in any small way, then we have succeeded.

But what about your life? I want to begin with a few passages that mention "your life." I mean, that phrase appears in the text.

Starting in Matthew 6:

24 ¶ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

This would be a good place to start in regard to our character. Are we serving God or money/possessions?

25 ¶ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Why no thought? The explanation is coming.

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 ¶ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Don't be overly concerned with the things that sustain life, understanding that God oversees and provides.

31 ¶ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Instead, seek God's kingdom first.

This theme prevails in the next passage that mentions "your life," from Colossians 3:

1 ¶ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

If you are saved, know Christ, seek things above.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Your affections should be on things above. Why?

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

This is a commentary on "your life." It is hid with Christ. More in the next verse...

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

He is our life - He ought to be.

The next reference reminds us of something else, James 4:

13 ¶ Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

We have very little time in this life - and everything depends on Him - on His will.

As we again put the emphasis on Him and not on ourselves, let's talk about the private challenges. They may be just as big as Goliath, but they come to us behind closed doors.

We find a wonderful example in Genesis 39:

1 ¶ And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

- The Lord was with him

It was not about Joseph.

- He was serving

This is where we find people of character - serving.

3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

- The Lord empowered him to prosper

His talent and personality could have been mentioned - those were provided by the Lord as well.

- The Lord was seen through him

This is the case with character (as we have already seen), His light shines through us and it is Him people see!

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

- He was given responsibility

This is a consistent theme...

- The master was blessed because of him

His life was being used by the Lord to impact others - this is what character does.

- He was trusted

The test of his trustworthiness was coming.

7 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8 ¶ But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

- He was ever-aware of his responsibility

How would this reflect upon God?

- He saw reality

This is where many of us fail in temptation, as we use language to soften and minimize sin. Joseph did not.

10 ¶ And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

- He was consistent

His mind was made up.

11 ¶ And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

(This is often when the challenge comes.)

12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

- He used the power of his feet

Power of human will was not enough.

Joseph doesn't begin in great circumstances (sold into slavery by his brothers), but he trusts and serves the Lord with integrity. This is recognized by others and rewarded. And he is empowered to prosper in his responsibilities. He never takes this for granted, but is able to step back and see the reality of his situation. And when the challenge and temptation are pressing, he gets out.