

Purposeful Purity

Of the many challenges that face Christians on a daily basis, one that rears its ugly head time and time again is the temptation to engage in impure thoughts and actions. Think about it. You get up in the morning and turn on your radio only to hear songs and even commercials that promote impurity. You go out into the world to school, work or the store and you both see and hear impurity on your way there and at your destination. You come home and turn on the television only to find more impurity. In fact, you can't even watch a "family" show without some disgusting commercial for a product or another program assaulting your vision. Impurity is all around us and is virtually inescapable.

With impurity being so thoroughly woven into the fabric of our society, many have become indifferent toward it and have just accepted it. Even Christians are not above harboring this casual attitude toward activities, clothing, speech and personal habits that are clearly denounced in God's Word and are far from becoming to the man or woman who claims to wear the name of Christ. Must we as Christians give in to societal standards? Must we go along with the crowd in order to fit in? Is it possible for us to live lives of purity in an impure world?

The mighty prophet Daniel set an example for us that is worthy of our consideration. Having been carried away from his homeland into the unfamiliar society of the Babylonians, Daniel found himself being given the opportunity to "fit in" with the standards set by the inhabitants of his new surroundings. Daniel 1:8 says, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Most certainly this issue of whether or not to eat the king's meat seemed insignificant in the eyes of the Babylonians and probably even in the eyes of some of Daniel's brethren. To Daniel, however, his eating of the king's meat was unacceptable. Perhaps the meat had been offered to man-made gods or perhaps it was unclean as per God's standards under the Law of Moses. Whatever Daniel's reason for rejecting the meat, he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. He was resolute in his decision and no amount of peer pressure or harassment or intimidation would sway him. He had one thought foremost in his mind; he was determined to serve God faithfully.

Other inspired writers demonstrated this same determination. David wrote, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11). In Psalm 101:3 he wrote, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." The apostle Paul said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14).

We can make it through this life without succumbing to the impurity that Satan models before us on a daily basis. Is it easy to do? Unless you yourself have already sold your soul to the god of impurity, you know that it's a battle to remain pure. If you think you're the only one who has ever struggled with this, just read of Paul's inner war in Romans 7:5-25. He made a statement with which each of us who strives for purity can readily identify when he said, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Romans 7:19.). The great man of God that he was, Paul nonetheless had to purpose in his heart that he would be pure and faithful in the eyes of God. It's a battle. God's people are in the minority. There are more influences for evil than for good surrounding us on a daily basis. This is true even if we strive to be sure that our associations are holy (I Corinthians 15:33). This would be disheartening and would give us a reasonable excuse for our impurity were it not for one outstanding fact stated in I John 4:4: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

Colossians 3:1-11 is a tremendous segment of Scripture that discusses the pure lives that we are to live as Christians. It begins with this powerful exhortation which essentially sums up the best way to keep our hearts and minds pure. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3). As Christians, we have a greater goal than enjoying the impurities of this life. We have the goal of

heaven. We cannot and will not get there by being impure. We must purpose in our hearts that we will live lives of purity, ever keeping in mind the ultimate reward of heaven for our faithfulness (Revelation 2:10).

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