

A Sterling Reputation

Fire, Water and Reputation went for a walk together. During their journey, Water asked, "Suppose we should get separated. How will we find each other again?" Fire replied, "It will be easy to find me. Just look for smoke." Water said, "Finding me will be easy as well. Just look for swampy land. What about you, Reputation?" Reputation replied, "Sadly, once you lose me, it's difficult to find me again."

Wise king Solomon wrote, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches..." (Proverbs 22:1) and "A good name is better than precious ointment..." (Ecclesiastes 7:1). Having a good reputation or a good name takes time. On the other hand, one can lose a good reputation in a matter of moments.

The Bible has much to say about attaining and then maintaining a sterling reputation. Peter wrote, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." (I Peter 3:15-16). Our reputations should be such that when people try to associate us with evil, they utterly fail at every attempt. Like the great prophet Daniel, it should be said of us that "they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." (Daniel 6:4). Granted, in both of these references we find people who tried to make things up about God's faithful children. People are going to say what they are going to say and we really don't have any control over their tongues. However, if our reputations are of the highest quality, the accusations our detractors make or the rumors they start will be squashed by those who really know us. If you'll permit a personal reference here, I recall one of my associates rebuking a customer over the phone because of the foul language he was using. The customer said, "Your boss talks like that." That led to another tongue lashing as this associate knew me well enough to know that I don't use that kind of talk. The customer backed down from his statement.

Our reputations should bespeak lives of diligence in business and fervor in spirit (Romans 12:11), love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Galatians 6:22-23), honesty (II Corinthians 8:21), purity (Ephesians 5:1-5) and Christ-likeness (I Peter 2:21). In essence, we should be men and women of God's Book for in so being, we shall reflect the light of the One who gave us His Word (Matthew 5:13-16).

Why is a good reputation so important? One reason is for the sake of our souls in eternity. A reputation of faithfulness to God comes from obedience and obedience is necessary if we want to go to heaven (Matthew 7:21-23). Another reason is for the sake of the souls of others in eternity. Jesus warned about bad examples that would lead others astray. "Then said he unto his disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." (Luke 17:1-2). Claiming to be faithful Christians while maintaining a reputation that is quite contrary to our claim can cause others to turn from God. Still another reason for having a good reputation is that, just as a bad reputation can lead others away from God, a good one can lead souls to Him. Many a door has been opened because a lost soul admired a Christian and wanted to know more about what made him or her so joyful, peaceful, faithful and holy.

What is the status of your reputation? Have you built it into one that others would want to imitate? Have you built it into one with which God is pleased? Have you done something to harm it and, if so, what are you doing to remedy the situation? For the sake of our own souls and for the sake of our influence on the souls of others, may we daily remember who we are and WHOSE we are. A reputation is a precious commodity and is of more value than the finest metal or the rarest jewel. Let each of us build it and then protect it by faithfully following God's Word.

Mike Gifford
Gifford7777@yahoo.com