

PERSONAL CHARACTER AND EVANGELISM

October 5, 2009

THE BIG IDEA:

Christians must demonstrate a life of holiness and personal character so the gospel is not maligned, easily ignored, or given a poor reputation.

One of the biggest problems facing the spread of Christianity is its poor reputation. Words such as "hypocritical", "judgmental", and "ignorant" are commonly applied to Christians, whether they are deserved or not. Sadly, these characterizations *are* often far too true. What we need – indeed, what the gospel deserves – is to protect the reputation of Jesus by modeling holiness as Christians.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, the apostle Paul declares that the Christian life is like running a race, and that we ought to run in such a way as to not disqualify ourselves. What this means is that as Christians and ambassadors for God, we ought not to disqualify ourselves from such titles by living a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

Colossians 3:1-17 is a lengthy passage that declares some of the things which Christians ought to abstain from in order to protect the integrity of our message. If Christians engage in conduct that is contrary to godliness, we risk destroying the reputation of the gospel and, more importantly, God Himself. Then, this passage lists some of the character traits that Christians ought to pursue. As such, we ought to clothe ourselves in righteousness and focus on "doing everything in name of the Lord Jesus", so that others will see God's love reflected in our hearts.

Supporting our witness as believers is crucial to the effective spread of the gospel. This is not to say that God is not powerful enough to overcome our failures; rather, that God works in us to make His name great.

Jesus declares in John 13:34-35 that the distinguishing mark of a Christian is love. (Interestingly, in the Colossians 3 passage it says "above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony".) The Scriptures declare that "God is love", and because we are "conformed to the image of his Son" as believers, we ought to be reflections of God's perfect love. This is the essential characteristic that as Christians we must seek to operate within. Love is the way in which God reaches the hearts of the lost and brings them back to him.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Is my personal character a good reflection on the gospel?
2. What sins in my life are hindering me from effectively witnessing?
3. What can I practically do to grow in the love of God?