



Lecture 1

Spiritual Integrity

INTRODUCTION

As we commence a new series, 'Spiritual Integrity,' we want to begin by explaining the meaning of the word. The dictionary defines 'integrity' as "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles." As believers in Christ, we need to realise **there is a big difference between what the world considers to be integrity and what the Bible teaches about integrity.**

THE WORLD'S UNDERSTANDING OF INTEGRITY

The individual without the knowledge of God and His Word has a "self-adopted" theory about what integrity is: typically, the world measures integrity by how a person abides by the law. In other words, if it is "legal" in Australia, it's okay. This is a self-made standard and the individual's conscience is appeased without the person realising they miss true integrity: **spiritual integrity according to God's Word.** Anything else has no eternal value.

"Man-made" or worldly integrity is produced by the flesh. Remember, the works of the flesh produce no good thing (John 6:63). Christians can mix their concept of "integrity" such that it is partly according to the Bible and partly according to self and the world's standards. This means they don't have their mind renewed with the Word of God. This will bring double-mindedness, because such a believer has both light and also darkness in their conscience.

TRUE SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY

The Bible has much to say about spiritual integrity, honesty, and living a blameless life. It also speaks of sincerity, loyalty, obedience, character and other qualities, but let's remember we cannot create any of these qualities ourselves, they are only produced by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22 (Wuest translation)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such things as these there is no law."

Unrighteousness comes from sin, and in order to sin, our conscience has to "give us permission".

Our conscience will reflect the degree of integrity in us. The conscience can be violated when a person's adopted level of integrity is disregarded. In order to violate our conscience, we need to somehow justify or rationalise the reason we are violating it.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word "TAMIM," translated "integrity" is defined as "the condition of being without blemish, completeness, sincerity, soundness, uprightness, wholeness." Integrity in the New Testament means "honesty and submission to God's Word in obedience."

Spiritual integrity is therefore obeying God's Word to our best ability.

JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus is the perfect example of a man of integrity. After He was baptised, He went into the wilderness to fast for forty days and nights, during which time Satan came to Him at His weakest to try to **compromise His integrity and corrupt Him**. Jesus was wholly man and wholly God at the same time, and He was tempted in every way we are, yet never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). This is the definition of integrity.

Christians are called to be like Jesus. In Christ, we are new creations and by grace, are now considered without blemish before God (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Colossians 3:17,23 (Wuest translation)

“And all, whatever you do in the sphere of word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, constantly giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Integrity in our world today is always tarnished by moral corruption. Christians should be those who cannot be bribed or compromised because we serve God rather than men.

Acts 5:29 (Wuest translation)

Then, answering, Peter and the apostles said, It is a necessity in the nature of the case to be obeying God rather than men.

We are to be people who keep our word.

Matthew 5:37 (Wuest translation)

“but let your word be, Yes, Yes, No, No; and that which is more than these things is of the evil which is in active opposition to the good.”

Living with integrity in a world where corruption has become the 'norm' - not to mention our battle with our own sin nature - is challenging. This next Scripture gives us encouragement:

1 Peter 3:13-18 (Wuest translation)

And who is he that will do you evil if you become zealots of the good? But if even you should perchance suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are spiritually prosperous ones. Moreover, do not be affected with fear of them by the fear which they strive to inspire in you, neither become agitated, but set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being those who are ready to present a verbal defense to everyone who asks you for a logical explanation concerning the hope which is in all of you, but doing this with meekness and a wholesome serious caution, having a conscience unimpaired, in order that in the very thing in which they defame you, they may be put to shame, those who spitefully abuse, insult, and traduce your good behavior which is in Christ; for it is better when doing good, if perchance it be the will of God that you be suffering, rather than when doing evil. Because Christ also died once for all in relation to sins, a just One on behalf of unjust ones, in order that He might provide you with an entree into the presence of God, having in fact been put to death with respect to the flesh [His human body], but made alive with respect to the spirit [His human spirit].