

RT Kendall: We Need to Pursue Integrity Now Harder Than Ever

What is integrity? Integrity is the willingness to get to the bottom of the truth no matter where it leads or what it takes to get them.

The pursuit of integrity is about the quest for truth. Or facts. It is only truth that sets one free that demonstrates the true presence of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). The question is, do we really want the truth? How far are we willing to go to get to the truth?

One thing that should surely bring about acute honesty is the consciousness that we are in God's presence. The appeal to the presence of God is like swearing an oath. If you swear an oath, you had better be sure you have authority to do so. The prophet Samuel invoked the presence of God in the declaration of his integrity. "Behold, here I am. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes with? Indeed I will restore it you" (1 Sam. 12:3). The people testified that Samuel had been transparently honest in his dealings with them.

The prophet Jeremiah had a rival. His name was Hananiah. Jeremiah prophesied that the Babylonian captivity would last 70 years. Hananiah invoked the presence of the Lord to claim the captivity would last only two years. Hananiah boldly proclaimed, "Thus says the Lord: Even so I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within the space of two full years. Then the prophet Jeremiah went his way" (Jer. 28:11).

Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Listen now, Hananiah. The Lord has not sent you, and you make this people trust in a lie. Therefore thus says the Lord: I am about to cast you from off the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the Lord.

So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month (Jer. 28:15-17).

The point is, if one claims to be speaking for God Himself, he had better be sure he is not being deceived. It is a scary thing to say, "Thus says the Lord." It is far better we never do this than to get it wrong.

Paul invoked the presence of the Lord when he used his apostolic authority to deliver an incestuous man—a believer—to Satan:

For indeed, though absent in body but present in spirit, I have already, as if I were present, judged him who has done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you are assembled, along with my spirit, in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:3-5).

In other words, whenever we invoke the presence of the Lord, it behooves us absolutely to be people of unquestioned integrity. We had better know what we are doing. I did it once—only once—during my 25 years in Westminster. It was when certain members were living in open sin and would not repent. The worst thing one could do is to invoke God's presence and not be in pursuit of the truth. It would result in judgment from the throne of God. As it turned out, the effect of Paul's invoking the presence of God as he did was that the incestuous man came to his senses and repented (2 Cor. 2:6-9). When I

invoked the presence of God at Westminster, the people climbed down from their arrogance and eventually came to live godly lives.

The issue is whether we are in pursuit of the truth—wherever it leads.

There are those who don't want to see a physician because we are afraid of what we might learn about our physical condition. So we delay going to the doctor. But surely this is wrong! Surely we should want to know if there is something wrong.

So too in the pursuit of integrity. We will not begin to achieve it until we do what it takes to get to the truth—about ourselves, about others, about what we teach about the Bible, about our theology and about anything pertaining to true facts we can find. It means being even-handed, impartial, rising above ourselves, and accepting input from friends and critics in order to arrive at the objective truth. The process can be exceedingly painful. But the liberty that follows is worth the embarrassment we may experience along the way. {eo}

 *Adapted from The Presence of God by R.T. Kendall, copyright 2017, published by Charisma House. This book will help you honor, glorify, and love God by learning to dwell in His presence. To order your copy, click on this link .*

Prayer Power for the Week of Sept. 30, 2018

This week as you pursue and live in God's truth, thank Him that He is the truth that sets you free, and for the Holy Spirit who helps you maintain and live in integrity. Continue to pray for revival and for our spiritual and government leaders. Pray for God's will to prevail concerning our Supreme Court. Continue to pray for our allies as well as our military personnel and their families. Read: John 14:6, 17; James 5:16.