

Gifting and Character

We are again experiencing the disappointment and even  disillusionment that comes when perceived servants of God fail. This is a dangerous time for us. How will we respond? Will we privately rejoice because we saw flaws and cautions that others did not see? Do we discount those who were healed, who came to faith or who experienced the move of God? Are we to assume that everything was a farce? Was there never any real hunger for God? Was it all sham and hypocrisy?

Years ago when a prominent television evangelist's moral failure was exposed, another television evangelist was publicly harsh and judgmental in his assessment. The Lord laid on my heart to write that television evangelist a letter. *"Brother, be careful. 'Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Matt. 7:1-2).'*" A few weeks later the sexual failure of the man who had done the judging was paraded before the American public. Most of us would affirm the gifting that was in both these men, but their character did not match their gifting.

Character and gifting are different. This is why we can sometimes see extremely gifted-of-God men and women who fail morally.

Remember the mightily gifted Samson whose character never matched the gifting. Do not forget David, the murderer-adulterer. Was David anointed? Yes. Gifted? Yes. Did he fall? Yes. Was he restored? Yes. Were there consequences of his failure? Yes. Yet God later described him as "a man after my own heart (Acts 13:20)."

Have we considered the fact that Peter lied three times on the night of Jesus' betrayal, but 50 days later was God's chosen

spokesperson to call the nation to repentance? I wonder if that young servant girl to whom Peter had lied was in the crowd that Pentecost day. If so, how difficult was it for her to hear the gospel through Peter's flawed, yet restored lips?

Sometimes, when we sin, we are restored to our ministry and destiny. At other times, according to God's own choosing, we forfeit a portion of our inheritance. This was true of Moses who, in that moment of pride said, "Must we bring you water from this rock (Num. 20:10)?" Because of his sin, Moses never entered the land of his inheritance. He was still the leader, but his time was cut short.

It is appropriate for us to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1), while at the same time realizing that we all are works-in-progress. We cannot only affirm as gifted those whose walk is perfect, yet "if someone is caught in a sin, [we] who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

May this recent exposure call forth an examination of our own lives! What about our own marriages? Are we loving our husbands, our wives? Are we walking in pride? Are we accountable?

As you examine your heart, pray this prayer, asking God to do His refining and strengthening work in you:

"Lord, have mercy upon us! Turn our propensity for judgment into mercy and intercession. May the disappointment and disillusionment that is ours through the sin of another work in us a radical pursuit of You, Lord; of Your Presence and Your gifts! May Godly character be worked in all of us! And may we be so open to Your will in our lives that when the fire and glory of God descend upon us, we will not disintegrate, but will be ignited with Holy Spirit power for the glory of God the Father and Jesus our Messiah and soon-returning King!"

About the author: Don Finto is the founder of The Caleb Company (), a prophetic fathering ministry named after Israel's fearless warrior whom the Bible describes as a man with a "different spirit," who was still conquering territory into old age and whose descendants inherited the land. Don was pastor of Belmont Church in Nashville, Tenn., for more than 25 years where, during the height of the Jesus movement, his own personal encounter with the Holy Spirit enabled him to be a leader for many who were turning to Jesus during that time, including some of the early contemporary Christian artists and Jewish young people.