

GOD'S TEST OF OUR TRUE VALUE

Proverbs 12: 8 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Nothing is as lasting and as needful and as helpful as having true Christian character. What a day we are living in! Daily we are being tested by God and others to see if we are men and women, boys and girls with a character changed by God, with a character worthy of praise because of our Holy Spirit led insights, wisdom, and following of Jesus? How tragic it is, if we come to realize we are despised, because we have been speaking and acting shameful, dishonestly, manipulatively, without integrity, because our minds have become warped, twisted, and perverted, as we have allowed the world to squeeze us into its own mold. God opened my mind this week to this one little verse to help us all prepare for taking the Lord's Supper. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, in I Corinthians 11: 27-30, exhorting them and all of us, saying, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body (that is the body of Christ broken on the cross for us) eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you, (and us) are weak and ill, and some have died." Character counts. Godly character is what God uses in our words and in our deeds, to reach our broken lost world for Him.

Ungodly character is when we speak of unapplied biblical truth as if we are living it. That is what is found at the very core of hypocrisy. That's what happens when we want to teach, mentor, preach, and model what is not really ours, deep down in our heart and soul. That is when we want to dispense and pass out to others, what is not ours inside, in truth to give. Charles Spurgeon said of John Bunyan, "Wherever you prick him, he bleeds scripture." If we don't know our own true value living in Christ, and if we don't persevere in our integrity and biblical wisdom, others won't be reached and saved. If the truth be known, it may even prove to us, honestly, before God, that we yet need to be converted.

Paul told his son in the faith, Timothy, in I Timothy 4: 16, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing, you will save both yourself, and your hearers." Our text today in Prov. 12: 8, in the NASB, states, "A man will be praised according to his insight, but one of perverse mind will be despised." The ESV translates this verse, "A man is commended according to his good sense, but one of twisted mind is despised." The KJV translates, "A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised." There is a saying, "Fake it til' you make it." It won't work. President Abraham Lincoln said it well, "You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time."

Integrity, wisdom, and moral courage are not suits in our wardrobe that we put on and take off. No, we allow God to clothe us with integrity, or we do not have it at all. Our lives must match our message. Do we ask others to do what we refuse to do? Do we ask our children to believe what we reject in practice or in our hearts?

Four words stand out in Proverbs 12: 8, (1) commended or praised, (2) insight, good sense, or wisdom, (3) perverse or twisted in mind or heart, and (4) despised. Taking a tip from Paul to Timothy, and examining this character test from Solomon, let's examine ourselves today before we come to take communion, and partake of the body and blood of our Lord, taking the broken bread, and the poured--out cup of the Lord. I see in our text four ways we can examine ourselves.

ARE OUR WORDS AND DEEDS COMMENDED BEFORE GOD AND OTHERS?

(I.) This verse begins with the phrase, "A man is commended, or a man will be praised. The Hebrew word for commend or praise, whether that commendation comes from God or others, is the word **hallal**. **Hallal** means to celebrate, to stand out, to shine, to be worthy of boasting about, to be renowned, to praise or to commend. Doesn't it make you think of God bragging on Job His servant, to Satan? Job 1: 8 has God **hallal**-ing Job, saying, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God/reverencing Him, and turning away from evil." May God give each of us all the goal of someday hearing God say to us, "Well done! Good job! Good and faithful slave or bondservant." Then God will show us our true value to Him, no matter what good things or what bad things people say about us here on earth. Paul warns us of being too upset over people who rain down judgment on us before the time, before the Lord comes, I Corinthians 4: 5, who will bring to light the things now hidden in the darkness and will disclose the motives and purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation/praise, His **hallals** from God."

We all get our share of being spoken about, praised, or condemned, blamed, mocked, criticized to our face, or behind our backs. Some words are up front. Some are anonymous. Some words are truly meaningful, as some are meaningless. Some words are simply mean and mean-spirited. But a day is coming when our **hallals** will come from God. As I was thinking of how we think and speak about others, God calls us to a higher standard than the world. Is this your standard of how you speak of your spouse, your children, your parents, your pastors, your leaders, and your employers? Philippians 4: 8 is clearly God's standard, whether we practice it or not. "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, (worthy of our hallals) if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise (worthy of our hallals) think about these things. The words of Elizabeth Elliot immediately come to my mind in her famous 80-20 rule. Have you heard it? Elisabeth Elliot has mentored thousands of women and men, through her books and messages, many of them on marriage. In one of her books, "Love Has a Price Tag," Elizabeth presents her 80-20 rule. Here it is: "A wife, if she is very generous, may allow that her husband lives up to perhaps eighty percent of her expectations. There is always the other twenty percent that she would like to change, and she may chip away at it for the whole of their married life without reducing it by very much. She may, on the other hand, simply decide to enjoy the eighty percent, and both of them will be happy." What to do? First, look in the mirror. What do you see? Are you a ten? Nope, you're probably—if you're honest—just about 80% your husband's dream girl. So, how do you have a terrific

marriage with two eighty percenters? If you add 80% + 80%, you get 160%. That means it's still better than one! A whole lot better than one! The Bible says, two are better than one (Ecclesiastes 4:9). Look at the good stuff. Enjoy his positives. Love your husband as he is, and appreciate him. Respect him as head of your home. Compliment, praise, and adore. And, you know what will happen? He will gradually change for the better. An appreciated person wants to be appreciated, so he'll try even harder to gain your approval. Praise him, and he'll strive to hear that praise again. Do you know what else will happen? You'll change. You will quit looking at the way he leaves his clothes on the floor or misses the laundry basket. You'll quit dwelling on how he chews his food. You'll quit being critical and demanding and acting like his mother instead of his wife. You'll be a happy wife, and, you'll have a happy husband. Your guy is 80%. Great! Enjoy him! In a few years . . . he'll be up to 90%. (Shhhh! It's our little secret.) I ask us all, "Are our words and deeds commended and commendable before God and others? Secondly,

ARE OUR WORDS AND DEEDS MATCHING BEFORE GOD AND OTHERS?

(II.) Proverbs 12: 8 states, "A man will be praised or commended according to his insight, good sense, or wisdom." The Hebrew word for insight, good sense, or wisdom, is **sakal**, or **sekel**. It means to be and to act wisely with deep understanding, to examine carefully, and to give careful attention to. The first use of this word is found in Genesis 3: 6. You remember God's word in Genesis 2: 16, 17, to Adam, who doubtless told Eve. What was the word? "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden (of Eden), but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." Eve, with Adam right beside her, silent, refusing to protect and lead his wife, listened as Eve talked to Satan speaking through the serpent. Adam didn't correct Eve when she misquoted God saying they could not even touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But know that from the start, from creation, this matching of our words with our deeds before God and others is quite the task. Satan knows here is a very vulnerable spot for us all. All of us can misquote scripture and make God look different from who He is. That's when Satan takes us on, and he poses as God's interpreter, and God's translator to explain away what God has said.

Notice in Genesis 3: 5, the serpent told Adam and Eve, "For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, discerning or knowing good and evil." What a temptation—you can become like God. So again, without Adam saying a word, Eve, acting not under his leadership, which he never showed any, 3: 6, she acted, and her deeds never matched God's words or her quoting of God's words. We read, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise—**sakal**, she took of its fruit, and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." The **sakal** or insight God longs to give us is how to interpret circumstances, events, tests, temptations, so we will follow God's word, so we will follow His promptings, and that we will do His will. Jesus said of His sheep in John 10: 5, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

One of the most important insights a godly man or woman can have, is what God showed Saul before he was named Paul. Do you remember Saul on the road to Damascus when he was killing and imprisoning Christians? Saul was the # 1 enemy of the church. Remember God blinded Saul and spoke directly and audibly to him, saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting the church?” Is that what God said? No, God said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Do you know, beloved, what Paul learned at his conversion? Paul learned that how we treat any other believer in God’s church is how we are treating Jesus. We are either loving others or persecuting them, either loving or persecuting Jesus. How we treat God’s Bride is how we are treating Jesus, the Bridegroom of the church. Gary Chapman in his book about the five love languages, explains that we love each other five different ways, (1) through giving quality time, (2) through words of affirmation, (3) through gifts, (4) through acts of service, and (5) through physical touch.

How should we treat our spouse? All five ways. We should attempt by God’s grace to be fluent in all five love languages with our spouse and our children. How we treat God’s church as a whole and each member of God’s church is how we are treating Jesus, our Bridegroom. How we treat each other is how we are treating Jesus. Can you imagine treating Jesus the way you treat your spouse or others? Don’t miss this. How you treat me and how I treat you is how we treat Jesus. Is God saying to you, “Why are you persecuting Me?” A quality servant of God knows God is ever stretching each of us, in unique ways and in unique areas of our lives, to keep us filled up with spiritual sap, to keep us evergreen for Him. Are our words and our deeds matching His Word before God and others? Thirdly,

ARE OUR WORDS AND DEEDS TWISTED BEFORE GOD AND OTHERS?

(III.) We further read in Proverbs 12:8, “But one of twisted/warped/or perverse mind/heart is despised.” The word for twisted, warped, or perverse is **avah**. It means to make crooked, or to make to turn away from the truth. God hates it when our words and deeds are crooked. Sometimes people who claim to be God’s people pose as supporting God’s work, and in a charade of sorts, convince others their motives are good, when their plan is to undermine the leadership or the vision of God’s people. Character traits that go hand in hand with twisted words and deeds are aloofness, bitterness, unforgiveness, holding grudges, too proud to confess sins in life, whispering and gossiping behind others’ backs. Scripture twisters abound today. Let’s examine for a few moments, warnings in the Word about people twisting, warping, perverting, and distorting the truth today. (1) **Scripture twisters arise within our own churches.** II Peter 2: 1 (2) **Scripture twisters will begin their twisting in common areas-denying the coming judgment, denying the Master who bought them, and deny the necessity of living holy lives to open the door to sensuality.** II Peter 2: 2,3. (3) **Scripture twisters often base their teachings on an obscure text, they interpret their way.** II Peter 3: 16 speaking of Paul’s words being twisted to people’s own destruction. (4) **Scripture twisters are untaught and unstable.** II Peter 3: 16. (5) **Scripture twisters have ulterior motives of greed, desiring money.** Titus 1: 11, Jude 11, 16, I Tim. 6: 3-5. (6) **Scripture twisters pervert the grace of God assuring followers they can indulge in sin without consequences.** Jude 4. (7) **Scripture twisters subordinate**

the Word of God to their own reason. Genesis 3: 5 (8) **Scripture twisters mix God’s truth with man’s truth, opening the door to teaching evolution as God’s truth.** I Timothy 6: 20. (9) **Scripture twisters strain gnats and swallow camels like the Pharisees.** Matthew 23: 23-24—focusing on tithing on mint, dill, and cumin, but neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness. (10) **Scripture twisters take certain scriptures father than they were intended.** Acts 15: 1-2, as Judaizers insisting Gentiles could not be saved without circumcision. (11) **Scripture twisters accommodate the Word of God to our culture and find the Bible in error when speaking of LGBTQ matters.** Romans 1: 18-32. (12) **Scripture twisters isolate one part of the Bible from the rest of Scripture denying the whole counsel of God.** Acts 20: 20,27 (13) **Scripture twisters refuse to hold seemingly contradictory truths in tension.** Matthew 22: 16-17 and this includes those who teach only God’s sovereignty or man’s freedom and responsibility, and refuse to teach both are God’s plan. (14) **Scripture twisters privately interpret the Scriptures with arrogant unteachability to make their points.** Paul says to them in I Cor. 14: 36, “Or was it from you that the Word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?” (15) **Scripture twisters use one truth to deny another.** Romans 6: 1 speaks of those who distort grace to give us excuse to sin. (16) **Scripture twisters selectively deny biblical teachings or commands as does Satan.** Genesis 3: 4—as Satan said to Eve, “You shall not surely die.” Some say God told them to get a divorce, or that divorce in their case is God’s will when God clearly says, in Malachi 2: 16, “For I, the Lord God, hate divorce.” Fourthly,

ARE OUR WORDS AND DEEDS SHAMEFUL BEFORE GOD AND OTHERS?

(IV.) The last phrase of Proverbs 12: 8 states, “But one of twisted mind is despised.” Let’s talk about this being despised. The Hebrew word for despised is **buwz**. It means contemptible, vile, to be scorned, disrespectful. False teachers have the gall to take God on, and criticize Him for commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son, and criticize Isaac for allowing his father to tie him up and thus to trust in God and his father, risking his death. Whatever God asks us to do will not be praised by everyone. God’s ways are not our ways. God tells us in Isaiah 55: 9, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Jesus said in Luke 9: 26, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory and the glory of the holy angels.” The Greek word for God being ashamed of us if we are ashamed of Him is the word **espaischunomai**. It means disgrace for what we have said and done in opposition to God’s holy Word and will.

God is testing me, and He is testing you. He wants our words and our deeds and our lives to be commendable, praiseworthy, straight as an arrow, and not words and deeds and lives that we will someday regret, that we will stand ashamed of and that will bring God to be ashamed of us. As we close, I call us to the words of Jude and the deep encouragement we have by God’s grace that He is able to keep us in these difficult days in which we live. Jude 24-25 is God’s benediction on our message and His heart for each of us as we come to the Lord’s Table. “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now, and forever. Amen.”