

INTEGRITY, INSIDE AND OUT

Psalm 101: 1-8 and Psalm 119: 1-6 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Pastor Stuart and Jill Briscoe are some of the sweetest Christian folks. I was able to join them in a small group for three days back in the 70's in N. Chicago. They are both sold out to Jesus. Their ministry and books reveal this. Stuart told of being hired by a bank as a youth. He was new and just learning the business. One day his boss told him, "If Mr. Smith calls for me, tell him I'm out." Stuart replied, "Oh, are you planning to go somewhere?" "No, I just don't want to speak to him, so tell him I'm out." Stuart said, "Let me make sure I understand--Do you want me to lie for you?" The boss blew up at Stuart. He was outraged, angered. Stuart said he prayed and God gave him a flash of insight. He replied, "You should be happy, because if I won't lie for you, isn't it safe to assume that I won't lie to you?" What would you have done? A professional golfer I have enjoyed watching, Ray Floyd, a true gentleman, was ready to tap in a routine 9-inch putt on the 18th hole. He saw his ball move ever so slightly. According to the rule book, if the ball moves in this way, the golfer must take a penalty stroke. Ray Floyd was among the top leaders in a tournament offering a top prize of \$108,000 at that time. To confess that his ball moved slightly would cost him the tournament. Ray Floyd confessed his ball moved slightly. He lost the tournament proving to a watching world his integrity.

Even last Sunday, in the AFC title game of the New England Patriots with the Indianapolis Colts, the question has been raised of whether the footballs were deflated by the Patriots before or during the game. The issue goes much deeper than the contents of the rulebook or the question of whether the Patriots would have won the game one way or the other. The issue at stake in the NFL admittedly is whether the integrity of NFL Football has been undermined. What is integrity? Whatever it is, it cannot be bought off for a large enough price. In a 1991, New York Times Bestseller book, "The Day America Told The Truth," James Patterson and Peter Kim, wrote this bestseller based on the most extensive ever national survey of private morals. They asked the question, "What would you be willing to do for 10 million dollars? Two-thirds of Americans polled agreed to at least one, and some to several of the following: Would you abandon your entire family (25%) Would you abandon your church (25%) Would you become immoral for a week or more (23%) Would you give up your American citizenship (16%) Would you leave your spouse (16%) Would you withhold testimony and let a murderer go free (10%) Would you kill a stranger (7%) Would you put your children up for adoption (3%) What would you do for 10 million dollars? It's all about integrity. Our behavior is based on our values, and fewer and fewer Americans today believe in the Bible. They don't think biblically as Christians. When we don't think biblically, we don't live biblically. Today's integrity is compromised by our

current culture of postmodernism which means truth doesn't exist except as an individual wants it to exist—it's all how we see it in our minds. There is no objective truth because truth is only what we believe it to be. Something can be truth for you and not for me. It's just whatever we feel comfortable with. We as believers have been called by God to believe in absolutes and absolute moral truth based on the Bible. II Corinthians 10:5 states, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." As I examine this psalm, some self-examining questions come before me that I want to share with you-eight questions, and how we answer these questions has much to do with whether we are men and women, boys and girls of integrity. One definition of integrity I would stand by is: Integrity is living a transparent life in the presence of our holy God. Do you? Do I? What are these 8 self-examining questions and what subjects do they cover?

PRAISES--WHAT DO WE SING ABOUT AND TO WHOM DO WE SING?

(I.) David said, "I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to You, O LORD, I will make music." Psalm 101 could well be called by a University Course name—"Integrity 101." David made a complete life commitment to integrity. We all know he made some terrible choices in his life, but whenever this psalm was written, one thing I know, is that this man after God's own heart, was resolving from then on to live blamelessly before God. His integrity would be intact in the privacy of his own home as well among his friends and colleagues. In sharp contrast to the corrupt lives of the kings of David's day, in the ancient Near East, David's integrity led him to respect the life of his sworn enemy, King Saul—the Lord's anointed. As followers of Jesus, we are all called to walk in integrity and to maintain a clear, clean conscience. When we honor our commitments to God and to others, we then walk in fellowship with God. Our integrity will guide us and help us walk securely.

Now what does integrity have to do with what we sing about and to whom we sing? David is telling us that God's steadfast love, His hesed, and His justice are the theme of his song. David is telling us that integrity begins in our heart and it shows in our song, our singing. As a king, David knew the balance needed to rule, and it is a balance for all rulers or leaders—mercy, loving kindness, and steadfast love must be balanced with justice. These two qualities in our lives and in our song are a check for each other. Kindness prevents justice from becoming too harsh and justice saves kindness from becoming wishy-washy—flabby and without accountability. And to begin with, David says these two themes of kindness and justice are the theme of his song. And in the second part of verse one—David confesses to the Lord that he aims to write and sing this psalm in praise to Him. Part of integrity is learning to magnify the Lord, day after day, in singing songs of praise to Him, making music to the God of heaven. Perhaps, one of the greatest

notes in verse one is that integrity begins in our hearts and it first of all, issues in music before the Lord. Why sing evil songs that have no kindness or justice like, “There must be fifty ways to leave your lover. Slip out the back, Jack. Make a new plan, Stan. Drop off the key, Lee and set yourself free. God forbid. Secondly,

PIETY—WHOM DO WE ADMIRE AND MODEL OUR LIVES AFTER IN OUR FOCUS OF READING AND WATCHING? (II.) Don’t let that word piety stop you or stump you. Piety is the act and fact of being reverent before God. I read in verse 2a, “I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will You come to me?” Beloved, integrity is more than what we sing about and whom we sing to. Integrity is also what we read about and ponder about and meditate about and watch for in others. Do we read biographies of great men and women of God? That’s what God has led me to bring to us on Wednesday nights as we have studied the lives of Adoniram Judson, Mary Slessor, George Mueller, Christiana Tsai, Solomon L. Ginsburg, Sadhu Sundar Singh, William and Catherine Booth, Malla Moe, and James Hudson Taylor. So far, these biographical studies are to help us ponder the way that is blameless. No heroes of the Christian faith are totally perfect, but we need to ponder walking this blameless way others have sought to walk. David calls his reverent focus a pondering of the blameless or perfect way. The Hebrew word for blameless is **tawmeem**. It means the complete or perfect way, the way of integrity and truth, the way without spot or blemish, and the sound, sincere, undefiled, wholesome, blameless way.

David adds, “Oh when will You come to me?” David’s reverence and piety for the blameless way rested ultimately on practicing the divine presence of God and walking uprightly before Him. Having godly heroes is very helpful, but ultimately, the face, life, love and glory of Christ is the mirror we all need for our lives—as we cry out to God—“Come, Lord Jesus!” But until He comes, we can cry, “Oh when will You come to me?” We can cry out as Moses did to God in Exodus 33: 19, “Please show me Your glory!” David, like Moses wanted a house call, if you will. He was crying and singing out for God to show up at his doorstep, to visit him. We too can long for divine visitations when God especially shows us His nearness and presence and glory. Integrity is all about our praise to God in song, yes, (1) but it is also (2) about our piety and reverence and our focus in reading and praying and watching and meditating and pondering on the Lord and His blameless way. 3rdly,

PRIORITIES—WHAT DO WE AIM AT AND LONG FOR INSIDE OUR HEARTS AND INSIDE OUR HOMES? (III.) Notice verse 2b. “I will walk with integrity of heart within my house.” The Hebrew word for integrity of heart is **tome**. This word is the root word of **tawmeem**. It means completeness, uprightness, fullness, not in unconfessed sin and guilt, with integrity, venturing on

God's promises, and simplicity of life before God. What were the priorities and principles governing David's life there away from the watching world? Integrity is about what we are like where others cannot see us. What are we doing in the quietness of our own home on our computer? What sites are we looking at on our computer? What movies are we viewing on television? The preceding words of David ask "When will you come to me?" This suggests that David expected home visits from God, God's inspecting eyes and God's pop quizzes along the way. David knew that God's inspections would be scrupulous and searching. He wanted to be found walking in integrity. We know David's longings for the Ark to be returned to Jerusalem. What do we aim and long for? Is it about the Lord—or is our ultimate longing for Wyoming to make it this year to March Madness? Do we live for our retirement? Do we live to get out of something God has called us to do, trying to get Him to change His mind? Do we live to deny sin when confronted? Integrity is how we respond to being faced with sins we have committed. To justify ourselves is to hide from God and others, a lack of integrity. Fourthly,

PRACTICES--WHAT WOULD THOSE NEAREST TO US SAY ABOUT OUR INTEGRITY? (IV.)

We read in verse 3a, "I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless." Notice these words of David were said in the context of His desire to have integrity in his own home. David was saying he would employ no one to do for him that which was wrong. There would be no more ever set-ups to hurt others as he misused, confused and abused Bathsheba in his role as king and he would never again send word to hurt and kill another to cover his sin as in the death of Uriah the Hittite. What does the word worthless mean. This word worthless or wicked is **beliyaal**. It means destructive, worthless, without profit, evil, naughty, or perpetrating sexual abuse by force. David was going for the juglar as it were, to stop himself from anything close to pornography or sexual deviancy. Translate it into the 21st century and David was shutting the door on watching or viewing pornography of every sort. The statistics of Christian men without integrity—that set before their eyes such worthless things ranges between 50-55%--and these figures come from recent studies of Christian men who are honest.

How many men refuse to face the truth? I ask us honestly—what do you think a spouse knows if any of us are using pornography? In counseling, I find that wives know before husbands confess, or even if they deny using pornography when they are, and husbands know when wives are using the same. Beloved, when will we sell out to Jesus and set no worthless thing before our eyes. I love Job's integrity in Job 31: 1 as he said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?" The Hebrew word for gaze or think upon is **biyn**. The word means to separate mentally—and it refers to looking with lust, separating the desire in lust from the clear fact that this person desired is a person, a sister, a mother, or a

virgin, a woman made in God's image. I charge us all—let's clean up our television watching and our time on the internet. May God purge His floor of worthless things before our eyes! May we cease to hide the truth about our lack of integrity with those who know us best—our spouse or our parents at home. Fifthly,

PRECAUTIONS—WHAT COMPANIONS DO WE SUPPORT AND WHAT FRIENDS DO WE ASSOCIATE WITH. (V.)

Notice Psalm 101: 3b,—“I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.” Do we shun evil companions? Paul warned us all in I Corinthians 15: 33, 34, “Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals. Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.” Paul is talking about entering a zone, a stupor where we all can zone out God, morals, and simply do what our desires crave. It is dangerous. Notice what David says—“It shall not cling or cleave to me.” Sin must not be hanging around sticking as with Velcro to our persons. What precautions have we set up? Men, for stopping pornography, there is a product called “Covenant Eyes.” It is worth the price. God make us take godly precautions with integrity. Sixthly,

PREVENTIONS—WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT WHEN WE HAVE TIME TO DAYDREAM? (VI.)

Psalm 101: 4 states, “A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.” A perverse heart must be cast far from us. David is saying, “I will not joke or shoot the breeze with someone with a perverse heart.” Had there been television or movies back then, David might well have said, “I will not justify watching vulgar sexually explicit scenes on the internet, on TV or in movies. I will shed them like a man searching for ticks after walking in the hills in the spring or like a mother combing her child's hair to get out even one lousy louse. Integrity will know nothing of evil. What preventions have you made to stop you from perversity of heart? Sadly, what perversities have some of us become experts in? Paul tells us in I Corinthians 14: 20, “Be infants or babies or naïve in evil, but in your thinking, be mature.” Are we experts on what websites to get pirated music and movies? Are we experts in gambling? Are we experts in evading taxes? Do we know exactly how many drinks it takes to get us or others drunk? Do we know which spots on the freeway are the places to slow down to avoid a fine or ticket? Why do we know so much about evil? Seventhly,

PROHIBITIONS—WHAT LINES IN THE SAND HAVE WE DRAWN REFUSING TO ACCEPT SLANDER OR ARROGANCE? (VII.)

Psalm 101: 5 states, “Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly, I will destroy; Who-ever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart, I will not endure.” Here David moves from integrity in private life to integrity in public life. David is being ever so strong here. David is death on secret slander and gossip—even listening to it as well as

himself, telling such lies. David was at his limit of endurance of pride and arrogance. Anyone with a high look, swelled up like a poison toad with arrogance, David had no time for. He would not endure them or tolerate them. What a dastardly set of twins David speaks of with deathly fervor—slander and arrogance. God save us all from such an end to our integrity—to abide gossip or to buddy up with arrogant, proud souls who know nothing of biblical humility. Eighthly,

PARTNERSHIPS—WHOM WILL WE DWELL WITH, WHOM WILL WE WALK WITH, AND WHOM WILL WE ALLOW TO MINISTER TO US?

(VIII.) Psalm 101: 6-8 is clear: “I will look with favor on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me. No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes. Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD.” Beloved, are we partnering with liars, deceivers, and speakers of falsehood? Integrity as we read in verse 8 is a daily task, a constant battle, starting morning by morning. We must keep our discernment antenna on red alert at all times. As we partner, we must have a no tolerance policy for all forms of evil.

Paul said in I Corinthians 6: 14-7:1, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness. Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portions does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.” Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”

David’s final words about integrity in partnerships sound like the words of a street sweeper. He wanted the city of the Lord, v. 8 swept clean of wickedness, cutting off all the evildoers and all, v. 7 who utter lies and practice deceit. David had high ideals which he didn’t always meet. How far short he came at times, but this psalm and song is God’s vision for integrity. The standard is high, but we must never lower it in praises, in piety, in priorities, in practices, in precautions, in preventions, in prohibitions and in partnerships. God help us walk in integrity as the highest purpose in our private life and the strictest policy of our public life. May we like David walk with integrity of heart before our holy God! Amen.