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Crossroads Community Church

Sunday April 26th, 2015

A bright sunny morning greeted us as we entered God's presence. We worshipped him with joy and gratitude for another day to live. Pastor Don shared announcements and prayed, ?Dear Father God we praise you for who you are, fill our hearts with your love, teach us to be witnesses for you with truth and integrity, in Jesus name Amen.?

Integrity, what does this bring to mind? Incorruptibility, standing by one's beliefs, honesty in all things, doing what we say we will do where word and action come into agreement. It is walking our talk, practicing what we preach regardless of the cost. After all are we trying to gain worldly approval or God's? Matthew 16:26 asks the same question, ?What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?? If our desire is to please God rather than man it will strengthen our integrity just like Daniel and his comrades Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

In the book of Daniel we have all read of the King Nebuchadnezzar. He had conquered Jerusalem and he took many of the elite Jews into captivity to Babylon,(Daniel 1:2). Daniel was in a stressful situation to say the least along with his friends. He was also internally wounded and distressed witnessing the Lord's sacred things falling into the hands of the enemy,(Daniel 1:4). Daniel was talented and chosen to work for the King's Royal service which required training. However this training did not line up with Daniel's beliefs and customs so, he boldly and respectfully asked the King to test him and his comrades for 10 days by allowing them to follow their own regimen instead of the one prescribed by the royal trainer. After the allotted time the king saw that Daniel and his friends were stronger and healthier than the others, consequently they all entered into the royal service. God had blessed Daniel for not compromising in order to satisfy the king, (Daniel 1:13-15). Daniel's integrity had been formed long before he was tested, his character grew in faith throughout his life so when the tests came he stood firm.

While in the royal service the king noticed the great wisdom Daniel and his men had and trusted them for advice. One day the king had a troubling dream and he was so desperate to understand its meaning that he decreed that if the wise men and satraps of the service could not explain the meaning they would be put to death. Naturally this would cause concern to Daniel and he immediately went to God in prayer asking for protection over his life and revelation to interpret the dream. When the king asked Daniel for the interpretation, Daniel did not compromise on his faith; he directed the king's attention to Almighty God. Daniel told the king that God was the one with the ability to reveal dreams not himself and then proceeded to give him the God given explanation. Daniel was humble and showed his integrity by giving God the glory. The king had no choice but acknowledge that Daniel's God was powerful, (Daniel 2:12-13, 18-19,47).

Unfortunately the king quickly forgot. He later built a tremendous statue and ordered everyone in the land to bow down to it every time music played, if anyone refused they would be thrown in the fiery furnace. In this case we find Shadrach, Mesheach and Abednego faced with a costly decision to remain faithful to God. Their integrity was being tested according to the 2nd Commandment, ?Thou shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything to worship idols,? Exodus 20:4. They were strong in their faith by God's grace and did not bow down. The king was furious but these three brave men did not compromise to save their lives, they displayed great faith and integrity, (Daniel 3:5-6, 15-18). This made the king even angrier so he threw them into the fire. The three men knew that the greater reward came by obeying God not by bowing to the fear of man. They also trusted God's faithfulness and power to save. That is what the Lord did, while in the furnace, God sent His power in the form of an angel and they did not burn. When the king and the other soldiers saw this they were amazed to see that there were not 3 but 4 men in the furnace, they even said the fourth looked like a son of god. When they let them out not even a trace of being in the fire could be seen on their bodies or clothes not even a smell. The Lord's power is truly undeniable that the king finally praised God, (Daniel 3:21-28).

Beloved we have all had the experience of moving at least once; it is quite unsettling accompanied by many worries and fears of the unknown. We have also faced fiery situations either in our workplace or in our relationships that test our integrity. The temptation to compromise to appease our fears of rejection or physical harm may arise but when we apply integrity to our faith and live according to what we say we believe, God will strengthen us to remain steadfast. When we rely on the Lord He will comfort us so we can comfort others. When others around us see how God works through our challenges they too will witness His power and give him glory. We can trust Jesus to help us overcome for He has told us these things, so that in Him we may have peace. In this world we will have trouble. But take heart! Jesus has overcome the world! Asherey Shalom!