

## Honor and Integrity

Honor and integrity are two words that are seemingly lost on our society today. This is clearly evident in the world, but unfortunately it is becoming all too common within the church. This teaching will explore what the commands of the Lord are regarding the concepts of both honor and integrity, and the terrible consequences that ensue when we fail to govern our lives according to these scriptural principles. We will find that the Bible has much to say on these topics and they are very important to our spiritual growth. I will point out that, as usual, our falling short in these vital areas has opened the door for the adversary to do tremendous damage to the church. You would be very wise to give careful consideration to these teachings to try yourself as to whether you are in the faith or not.

Our foundation Scripture is found in Romans 13:7, Where it says “*Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor*”.

### I. Honor

**A:** What is Honor?

It is clear from the scriptures that we are commanded to give honor in a number of quarters, however if we don't know what honor is we will certainly not know if we are being obedient or not. Webster's Dictionary defines honor as follows: *The esteem due or paid to worth; high estimation; reverence; veneration*. In the New Testament there are two Greek words that are translated honor.

1. *time'*; 5092 a price paid or received; esteem espec. Of the highest degree or the dignity itself. Honor, precious, price
2. *doxa*: 1391; glory, as very apparent, dignity, glory, honor, praise, worship

We can see then that honor has to do with some intrinsic value of something and the honor worthiness of that something is independent of the reckoning of any outside agency. In other words, if something is due honor, then it is due whether you agree with its honor worthiness or not. This is a most important consideration, since many times people fail to show honor because they don't like someone or they don't agree with them. However in the case of human affairs, the honor due is by virtue of the position of the person, and not by how well they may be performing in that position. For example, we may not like our politicians or agree with the job that they are doing, but they are due honor because they hold the “position” of honor. So then we can see that in its most fundamental form, honor is first perceiving that something is worthy of high esteem and reverence. Then we need to be diligent to render it unto that vessel that we have perceived is worthy of honor. Remember that what makes something “worthy” of honor is the office or position that they hold and not necessarily anything that they emanate themselves. Also remember that the honor worthiness of something is not diminished because you don't recognize them or their position as honorable. For that which is deserving of honor has been ordained and established by God and cannot be abrogated by man. We ignore this principle at our peril, for to revile the position or the position holder is to revile God. Here are several powerful examples of this principle in the Bible.

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4: 12-14 Here the Lord commands us to endure when we are reproached for the name of Jesus, for on our part the Spirit is glorified. On the part of the one doing the reviling, He is blasphemed, since to insult us as children of the most High God, a highly honored position, is to insult Him whom we serve. Notice that this insulting occurs

whether you recognize these things or not.

Acts 5: 33-42 In this passage we find that the apostles had been warned not to teach in the name of the Lord Jesus, a warning that they wisely ignored. They were then brought before the ruling council who sought to have them killed, but one of them, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, advised to let them be. He reasoned that if they were speaking presumptuously they and their doctrine would not endure. However if they were of God, then those who opposed them would be guilty of withstanding God Himself.

Of course the most glaring examples of dishonor can be found in the gospels concerning the ministry of the Lord Jesus. We see Him constantly being opposed and insulted by the very people that He had come to help. They paid the price for this breach of protocol in that they rejected their opportunity to have national salvation. Instead their society was left in decay for having rejected and insulted the very God to whom they had been crying out to for deliverance.

### **B. How is Honor Manifested toward Someone?**

1. Honor does not revile or speak disparagingly.
2. Honor demands recognition of the title of the office, lest we be tempted to be contemptuous. Using the title of the office reminds us of the honor that is due to the office holder.
3. Honor does not readily receive accusation against the honorable one, unless it is strongly supported by appropriate evidence.
4. Honor does not allow for the correction of the honorable one by those that are in subordinate positions, even if they are right in their judgement. The appeal must always be directed to the higher authority, who will judge the matter, and if there is merit then he will speak on behalf of the subordinate ones.
5. Honor speaks to the honorable with respect, maintaining an attitude of reverence.
6. Honor yields to the doctrinal or positional authority of the office.
7. Honor is bestowed upon the honorable. It does not emanate from within. In other words, those that are honorable do not honor themselves, but they receive honor from those who recognize them.

In studying all of these attributes of honor, we can see that they are all voluntary acts of our will. We choose to be honorable or we choose to be dishonorable. As mature children of God, we should have such confidence in our own relationship with God that we shouldn't have to build ourselves up by dragging someone else down. This is the most unfortunate legacy that many carry from their sojourn in the world, where they are taught to despise themselves and to feel inadequate. Being babes they sow to the flesh and despise authority and reject the ruling ordinances of God that are placed in the body for the profit of all. Men of this sort are very pointedly described in the bible, where they are described as self willed and presumptuous to the extent that they even presume to speak evil of "dignitaries". These celestial beings, although working contrary to the cause of righteousness, were created and ordained by God, and as such are not subject to reviling by the terrestrial.

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2: 10-11

Jude v. 5-11

There is very little taught in the body of Christ on the subject of honor, which is quite surprising since the Bible has much to say on the matter. We are given very specific instructions on how to both recognize and to treat those worthy of honor. There is a responsibility also on those to whom honor is due; and that is to be both worthy of the honor that is bestowed, as well as to command it from those who owe it. Otherwise those that are in positions of honor do despite to the office if they allow it to be treated contemptuously. The application of honor crosses many borders of human interaction and finds its way into many forms of interpersonal relationships. I will now discuss some of them individually, showing the principles from a Biblical perspective.

### **C. Honor Within the Family.**

1. Husbands and Wives: By ordination of God, the husband has been declared to be the head and lord of his family (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11: 3) and as such he is due all honor and respect by everyone in his household. The husband's rule is absolute and cannot lawfully be abrogated to anyone including his wife. The marriage headship is not a democracy or rule by consensus, but is modeled on the framework of the Lord Jesus as Head of the Church. As has been discussed in previous teachings, it is the failure of the men in this vital area, that has led to the tremendous erosion of the integrity of the family unit. Today stable nuclear families are now the exception rather than the rule. The Bible makes the following commands with regards to the relationship between the husband and wife.

**a.** Wives are to be respectful toward and subject to their own husbands.

Eph. 5: 22-24

Tit. 2: 1-5

Col. 3: 18

1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3: 1-6

**b.** Husbands are to love their wives even as the Lord Jesus loves the church.

Eph. 5: 25-30

Col 3:19

1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3: 7

**c.** A man must be found faithful to rule his household well, especially if he desires to be used by God in any meaningful capacity.

1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3: 4-5, 11-12

The premise here is that if a man is not faithful in the little that constitutes his own household, then he certainly won't be faithful in the larger concern which is the house of God.

**d.** A man must give honor to his wife recognizing that as the weaker vessel, she is ill equipped to handle the stresses of life without his guidance and nurturing. He must be always ready to defend her and protect her from harm especially in the spiritual realm, where she is particularly vulnerable to deception. He must dwell with her with understanding, knowing that she is a different sort of creature than himself, and will not see or interpret matters in the same way that he does. If a man fails to account for this then he will lose patience with his wife and become frustrated with her and eventually be embittered toward her. This of course will result in a breakdown in the unity and peace of the household and hinder the husband's prayers and relationship with his head: namely the Lord Jesus.

As a case study we will examine some marriage dynamics from the Bible so that we may learn how not to administer a relationship. In other words, from obedience to the lessons learned from someone else's sacrifice, we may avoid the same tragic fate of those so exemplified.

King Xerxes and Queen Vashti (Esther. 1:9-2:4)

King David and Queen Michal ( 2<sup>nd</sup> Sam. 6: 16-23)

King Ahab and Queen Jezebel

1<sup>st</sup> Kings 16: 29-31

1<sup>st</sup> Kings 21:1-29

On the other hand there is a wonderful example in the Bible of how a marriage should function, and that is the relationship between Abraham and Sarah. These two are put forth by God as examples to both men and women as to how each should behave within the covenant of marriage. Abraham, who became known as the father of the faithful, was found trustworthy by God. He knew that Abraham would command his family in the ways of the Lord, that he would be obedient to His statutes, and be found faithful in all of his ways, a fitting example for any man to follow. As for his wife Sarah, she stands as the eternal example of wives everywhere in that she was totally submissive to her husband, calling him lord. By studying the lives of these Biblical examples, we can learn much from them, both how and how not to administer a marriage. The legacies of their lives should make the choice of example easy.

**e.** Lets discuss some of the contemporary ways that marriages fall short of the command of honor.

Wives that keep their maiden names or hyphenate it with their husband's name

Wives that talk disparagingly about their husbands to others, especially to "unauthorized" persons such as mothers, friends, co-workers, their children, or relatives

Wives that have agendas and destinies that they insist on pursuing even though they are at odds with her husband's wishes

Wives that withhold sexual intimacy from their husbands or neglect their duties around the house, usually as a

controlling tactic to get their way.

Wives that are rude and disrespectful to their husbands, saying such things as “You shut up.” or “ you can’t tell me what to do.” These transgressions are bad enough when they are alone, but they become capital offenses when done in public.

Wives that refuse to allow the husband to be the decision maker for the family( for example in such matters as naming the kids, if, when, and where to buy a home etc.)

Wives that seek to control the finances of the family, even to the thinking that just because they may have worked for some of the family finances, that it gives them the right to exercise control of the spending of said finances.

Husbands that allow their wives to get away with any of the above mentioned transgressions

Husbands that allow themselves to become emasculated at the hands of their wives. A wife should not be more man than her husband.

Husbands that allow their wives to shoulder the burden of administering the family, such as dealing with the kids, bill collectors, irate neighbors, and the like.

Husbands that allow their wives to take on a role of spiritual leadership within the family(deciding what denomination to be , what church to go to , whether or not to tithe etc.

2. Parents and Children: The Bible commands us to have honor for our parents and, as a matter of fact, there is the possible consequence of a shortened lifespan for not doing so.(Eph. 6:1-3) A word of caution is indicated here, for honoring your parents does not extend to necessarily following their council once you reach adulthood. I would define adulthood as a man who has left father and mother to be joined to his wife, or the woman who has been given to her husband in marriage. Under these circumstances such a man must be led by the Lord into his own destiny which may put him at odds with his parents. In that case he must be willing to “hate” his parents in order to love the Lord Jesus. Similarly a married woman’s allegiance is to her husband above all else, and she is to follow his leadings even if that puts her at odds with her parents. Now of course these matters can be handled with tact so that one does not revile their parents, but nevertheless we are commanded to be in subjection to that which is our head. In the case of the wife, that is her husband, and in the case of the husband that is the Lord Jesus. We who are parents are admonished to raise up our children in the fear of the Lord, and not to provoke or discourage them.

#### **D. Honor in the Church:**

This is an area where dishonor is running rampant, little wonder since it is so deficient in the home, which should be serving as a model of honor.

Examples:

#### **Honor for the Brethren:**

1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:17-34

Gal. 5:13-15

Eph. 5:18-21

Col. 3:12-16

### **Honor for the Lord's Anointed**

1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:17-19

Heb. 13: 7,17

Gal 6:6

1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:1-4

Acts 20:28

1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 31:1-9 David and the man who “killed” Saul.

2<sup>nd</sup> Sam 1:1-16

Num. 16:1-5 The rebellion of Korah

Acts 23:1-5 Paul and the High Priest(Exod.22:28)

2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 1: 1-18 Elijah and the captains of fifty

### **E. Honor in the Social Realm**

The Master of the House. Luke 14:7-11

### **F. Honor toward our neighbors**

Rom. 13: 8-14

1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:11-12

### **G. Masters and Servants**

1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 6:1-2

1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:18-20

Eph. 6:5-9

Col. 3:22-25

## **H. Honor toward the Ruling Authorities**

Rom. 13: 1-5

1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2: 13-17

Tit. 3: 1-2

## **II. Integrity**

**A.** We will now move on to a discussion of the concept of integrity. Following the same model as with honor, let us define the meaning of the word integrity.

Webster's gives the meaning as follows; (L. integritas, wholeness, soundness, from *integer*, untouched, whole entire

1. *the quality or state of being complete, wholeness, entireness unbroken state.*
2. *the entire, unimpaired state or quality of anything; perfect condition, soundness*
3. *the quality or state of being of sound moral principle uprightness ,honesty, and sincerity.*

Strong's Concordance gives for us the following Hebrew word which is translated integrity; **tome**: 8537: completeness, full, integrity, perfect, simplicity, uprightness

There is no direct Greek word in the Bible translated integrity, however based upon the meaning of the word that we have discovered so far, we can safely use the following analog **teleios** 5046: a word usually translated perfect which means : complete,(in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, of full age, man, perfect.

So now it becomes clear that to have integrity is to be complete and whole, in other words to be completely intact, which by implication would involve all aspects of the triune nature of man namely, spirit, soul and body. We can now see how important having integrity is to us in enabling us to withstand the attacks of our adversary the devil. Notice the following admonitions from the Scriptures.

- a. Eph. 4:26-27 *“Be angry and do not sin” do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.* The implication here is quite clear, that if we are whole and our “integument” intact, then the devil has no way to enter in to afflict our lives.
- b. Eph. 6:10-17 *Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* Using the metaphor of armor the Lord instructs us to completely cover ourselves with the attributes that will make us impervious to the destructive effects of the fiery darts that will surely come our way from the hand of the evil one. Again notice the protective effects of being whole and complete. By so being it protects the inner most areas of our beings, keeping us from going down in defeat at the

hands of our enemy.

c. Matt. 5:43-48 In this example the Lord Jesus shows us how to achieve perfection, and by so doing reveals to us that, contrary to what you have heretofore been taught, it is indeed an obtainable goal.

## **B. Perfection**

A recurring theme so far in our discourse is the word perfection. Now this word strikes fear into the heart of most Christians, since they see this condition as an impossible goal. However I will show you that not only is it possible to achieve perfection, it is actually a command from the Word of God. No doubt there will be much dissention on this matter, since for so long the Church has been saddled with a mentality of weakness and immaturity. This leads to an attitude of futility resulting in wholesale failure in the affairs of life. Nevertheless, perfection is entirely obtainable and it is this perfection or maturity that constitutes the heart of integrity.

One source of resistance to perfection is ignorance of the true biblical connotation of the word. Biblical perfection does not mean being flawless or never making a mistake. It concerns itself with that state of being whereby a Christian has succeeded in patterning their lives according to the commands of the Word, which basically means that they walk in the spirit not the lust of the flesh. Perfection or integrity concerns itself with those who, by use and practice of the Word, have learned to side in with God on every revealed precept, that is to be in one accord with Him. For example both the spiritually base and mature may be in error on something or have fallen short in something. When the error is revealed, the perfected one will side in with the Word and make the appropriate changes in their lives, while the base one will continue to “struggle” refusing because of pride, to be molded by the Word. and Thus they will reap in the form of perpetual failure, the penalty of their error. Stated in its most elementary form, perfection is defined by , and exemplified in the individual who has succeeded in making the principles of the Word of God part of their everyday walk in life. It is one who always makes the choice to respond to every situation in a way that is consistent with the statutes of the Lord. This is the man who will be considered upright before the Lord and complete in the integrity of his heart. I submit to you that this is the best will of God for all who would be called by His name. Bear in mind that, as always, it is my policy to teach you from the point of view of God’s best, for no one runs in a race where the finish line is indeterminate. So if we know that the finish line is 100 meters away we will discipline ourselves and strive to reach it. We will also know if we have indeed reached it, and thus rejoice in the victory that comes from completing the race. Remember that in the economy of God, the prize goes to he who finishes, not to him who merely runs.

At this point it is necessary to point out that those who do indeed reach perfection, will of course be reviled and persecuted by those who are still ignorant, or by those who prefer to wallow in their own recalcitrance and failure to be obedient. It is these who will resent the example of maturity and overcoming in life shown by those who have been perfected by the Word. But such a one should not lose heart, knowing that it is the will of God that we glorify Him and His covenant by enduring suffering even at the hands of those who presume to be our brethren, in spirit, but in deed are enemies of the faith. Nevertheless, happy is the Christian who is able to hear these teachings and to grow into the maturity that is available to us through the Word of God. I will show from the Scriptures what the heart of God is regarding the notion of perfection concerning the saints. You can see for yourselves what manner of persons the Lord has in mind for us to evolve into, as well as the instructions that make for said evolution. It is not profitable to resist the Word, since then we are not walking in the role of being stewards of the Word serving those who may learn from our example of obedience. The bottom line is this, the Word commands us to be perfect and then shows us what constitutes perfection, and how to achieve it. And if the Word cannot deliver on its promise then what good is it? But does our disobedience nullify the good Word of God? Certainly not, but as it is written, let every man be a

liar, but let the Word of God be found to be true.

### **C. The Witness of the Word on Perfection**

Just in case you are still in doubt about the Lord's desire for us to be perfect, let us explore the following Scriptural pronouncements.

Matt. 19 16-22

Luke 6:40 (KJV)

Eph. 4:11-13

John 17: 20-23

1<sup>st</sup> Cor 2: 6

2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:11 ( 2675, kataritizo- to complete thoroughly, to make perfect)

Col 1: 24-28

2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3: 16-17 Gr. Artios(739) - complete, perfect

James 1: 2-4

James 3:2

1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:10

Phil. 3: 12-16

Heb. 6:1

Heb. 10:1, 12-14

### **D. The Case for Flawlessness**

Many reject the notion of perfection because they mistake perfection for flawlessness. This is erroneous thinking and prevents the Christian from even striving on toward the upward goal of spiritual maturity which is encompassed about by the concept of perfection. Consider the following analogy. According to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:4-5, and 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:12, those of the Church are likened unto precious stones or jewels, being built up into something glorious, each one taking its part within the economy of God. In the natural, diamonds are considered to be amongst the most precious of gems. They come in many shapes sizes and colors. They are also graded according to a scale of clarity based on the number and size of imperfections that can be seen either with the naked eye, or under a ten power magnifying lens. When a stone exhibits no imperfections under the ten power lens, it is considered to be flawless, or perfect. That does not mean however, that the stone would not reveal any imperfections if it were to be observed under a higher

power lens, which is always the case. But for the purposes of commercial concern, flawlessness at the ten power level is considered to be an adequate resolution to present the stone to the consumer as a very rare and highly valuable commodity. Now applying this logic to the church, the diamond is the individual Christian, and the ten power lens is the limit of the resolution by which the outside world may perceive you. This also conveniently corresponds to the limit of flawlessness that can be obtained, owing to the limitations of the flesh. Now this we know, that as long as we are at home in the body we will be limited since the flesh is at enmity with God, and is non redeemable. However, God, who knows our frame, is well aware of this condition, and does not require demonstrations of flawlessness beyond the “ten” power range.

Well this sounds all well and good, but how does it translate into generating a sense of confidence in being in the perfect will of God? Let us examine a frequently addressed area of stumbling in the average Christian. That is the statement that says “ I can’t be perfect since I sometimes have thoughts that are not consistent with the Word of God”. Many of our brethren are being made to stumble in this when the adversary succeeds in bringing in perpetual condemnation which leads to a loss of self esteem, and a sense of hopelessness. Well, to the one who is redeemed, there is a difference between thinking about doing the crime and actually going through with it. The one who is in darkness has no check in his spirit because he has no light in him. He is capable of unbridled acts of indulgence of the flesh, having been freed from the restraint of the spirit. So then God will judge us on the deeds of our lives not the intentions. To those that are redeemed, the ability to discern good from evil, as well as the strength to resist the call of the flesh, is present in our hearts through the reception of the remission of sins. Our hearts were transformed from darkness to the light that is present in the blood of the Lamb. Now of course this works in reverse as well. Paraphrasing what the Apostle James tells us in Chap. 2:14-18, good intentions that are not followed up with good deeds are of no value in demonstrating saving faith.

Of course right about here, the skeptic among you would interject Matt. 5:21-30, where the Lord Jesus, in gave instruction on the way of righteousness. He declared that the sin that condemns us begins in our hearts long before we actually commit the transgression. But it is clear from the history of God’s dealings with mankind that no one ever suffered condemnation without first demonstrating by deed the evil that was already resident in their hearts. The Lord Jesus simply used this principle to manifest the sin of self righteousness in those who trusted in the arm of flesh as a means of delivering them from the snare of sin. These presumptuous ones thought that because they had not murdered, or committed adultery, that they were righteous and worthy of eternal life. What they failed to realize is that as far as God is concerned, in judging the intrinsic righteousness of man, the propensity to do evil is tantamount to having done the evil. It is the presence of evil in us that disqualifies us, since if there is any evil in us then as far as He is concerned, we are evil. So someone may not have committed sin a, b, or c, but they would commit sin d, e, or f. For He knew full well that whatever is in the heart of man will manifest itself. This is why the law was incapable of making anyone righteous, since to break any of the laws was to break the law, for the law is one. In other words God knew that when it comes to man, it is not doing evil that makes sin dwell in us, but we do evil because sin does dwell in us.

Are we then doomed to be perpetually beset with a sense of condemnation leading to hopelessness? Are we to never walk in the victory over sin that Jesus has promised us? Certainly not! For this is the wonderful message of the Gospel, that He has come to purge us from the sin nature, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He has come to remove from us the shackles of an unregenerate heart by which we were bound to the sin nature, and instead to write His laws on the tablets of our hearts. Sin now dwells only in our flesh and operates through our carnal minds. The remedy of the presence of Christ Jesus and His words in our hearts, as well as His holy Spirit in residence in us, gives us full assurance that although the opportunity for sin will remain, we are well able to resist it and overcome it. Life and death both proceed forth from within the heart of man. So then the key to overcoming sin is to first renew your

mind with the Word of God so that your soul will begin to side in with your spirit on all matters. Then you must reckon your flesh as dead in crucifixion, thus removing the opportunity for your members to pollute you through disobedience.

Summing up these matters we can conclude that the Christian that has matured in the use and practice of the Word will be able to discern both good and evil. Having renewed his mind to the truth, he will no longer be base in understanding, nor a babe in conversation. The mature Christian will, within the limits of the “ten” power resolution of the world, appear flawless thus satisfying the commands that drive us on toward perfection. Now it should be readily understood what the Lord meant in Ephesians 5:27 when He talked of presenting His bride to Himself. She is, “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish”. Rejoice in the knowledge that this state can be achieved. It is most declarative of our faith in the Bridegroom, when it becomes part of our being while we are at home in the body. Remember also the testimony given by the Holy Spirit concerning those that have been found worthy to enter into life: He who has saved us is also the One who has made us to be kings and priests (Rev. 1:5-6). Now these kings and priests, what does it mean? Is there a difference between being a king and priest, and being weak and beggarly? Most assuredly there is. This is the very heart of the matter. We, as Christians, must learn to see ourselves in the same highly esteemed position that we are seen by the Lord, in the same manner that He sent His only begotten Son. He was high and lifted up yet, He did not use His position as an opportunity for self aggrandizement, but through obedience to the upward call of God, He demonstrated His love for us, not in castigation, but in service. Inasmuch as He has been put forth as our example, we who have been similarly honored by the eternal Father, should go and do likewise, for this man Christ Jesus has come to demonstrate that true royalty does not need to be self inflating, but is most clearly shown in carriage and conversation, and reaches its pinnacle in esteeming others higher than yourself, this being proven by treating them as more royal than yourself.

### **E. The Attributes of Integrity:**

According to 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:5 where it says “*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed you are disqualified.*”: We are instructed to take a good hard look at ourselves to determine if we are obedient to the commands of God or not. As it applies to the concept of integrity, it is eminently possible for us to determine if we are walking in perfection or not. I will expound on some of the attributes that we should be examining to see if we are conforming to the image of the Lord.

1. **Honesty:** Is your testimony above reproach, and can you be relied upon to be truthful in all circumstances, even if it causes you harm? For you see, anybody can tell the truth if it's in your best interest.
2. **Reliability:** Can you complete the task at hand, even without supervision, or do you only put forth effort when you are being watched? Can you be trusted? Is your word any good? In other words, as Jesus said, Is your “yes, yes and your no no”?
3. **Maturity:** This is of course one of the most important aspects of perfection. Mature Christians are confident in their relationship with God so they are rarely moved or shaken by things external. Maturity is not easily offended, in other words the mature person does not wear his heart on his sleeve. The person who is mature is able to receive correction, and stand up under rebuke.
4. **Self Control:** Those who walk in perfection are not easily provoked, and are not given to wrath, preferring to suffer the insult rather than to respond in the flesh..

5. Pettiness: The mature Christian does not involve himself in small minded antics, such as jealousies, gossip, backbiting and the like.
6. Esteem of the body: The perfect Christian esteems his brethren higher than himself, and is always ready to be of service. He is ready to defend the cause of the weak, and to side in with righteousness in everything. He is careful not to sow division within the body.
7. Envy: This is a particularly dangerous fault since it betrays a host of character flaws, such as discontentment, selfish ambition, and low self esteem.

## **F. Integrity within the Ministry**

A word of caution is in order here. As the Church, we have abandoned the idea of perfection, preferring instead to dwell on God's acceptance of our failures, rather than on His ability to deliver us from them. This attitude works contrary to the notion of deliverance which is obtained through faith in the name of Christ Jesus. Remember that deliverance is the process of taking you from point a to point b. If we remain at point a then no matter how much we talk of the joy of being at point b, we will never have any actual experiential knowledge. It is only by this kind of knowledge that we can actually convince anyone else of the reality of the kingdom of God. As if this condition weren't bad enough, we compound it by exhibiting the hallmarks of imperfection. We exhibit pettiness, envy and jealousy toward those who do manage to apply the Word of God to their lives and achieve the perfection that comes from obedience to the doctrines. Such people are accused of being arrogant and prideful and spoken evil of without cause. It would be much better for these if they would be provoked to Godly jealousy so that they could find out how these perfect Christians were able to overcome the flesh. Then they could walk upright before the Lord, and follow their example. Remember that the only way to prove that the seed is good, is to plant it and observe the good harvest of fruit that ensues from careful husbandry. This is the way that we will convince the world of the reality of the Kingdom of God, and fulfill our commission from the Great Shepherd to be the light of the world.

The epitome of the notion of perfection is illustrated most profoundly in the ministry office of Pastor. We are to be the tangible examples for the sheep to follow, for the command of the Lord to them is to follow our faith, considering the outcome of our conduct.(Heb. 13:7) If we are weak and defeated, so too will they be, for the students will not exceed the teachers, but they will be like them. Remember that this principle works both ways. If their man of God is perfect then his people will be too, but if he is beset with immaturity, then this too will be most evident in those to whom the Lord has given him charge over. The only way that a man of God can administer effective leadership, is to do so from a position of compliance with the Word of God. Anything contrary to this would make him a hypocrite. The Lord took great pains to inform the church of the requirements that He demands that a man of God must meet before he presumes to exercise authority in the name of the Lord.

1<sup>st</sup> Tim 3:1-7

Titus 1:5-9

It is imperative that we who would tend the lambs of the Lord remember that we will one day give an account to Him of our stewardship of said lambs. It will go well with us if our testimony is that we have imitated Him, and then commanded those who we ruled over to imitate us. To the extent that the sheep did not heed our witness and

fell short, then it would not be debited against us or impact on our reward.

There is no more important place to make your election sure than when it comes to being in the pulpit. He who is really called of God must be above reproach in his testimony, otherwise the opportunity for the accuser of the brethren to undermine the ministry through hypocrisy will surely be exploited. The time is short and we can no longer afford to minister the Word of God from positions of defeat, having been overcome by the enemy. We cannot continue to belie the goodness of the seed of the Word, but as a man of God it is essential that we have integrity. In this way we will be able to fulfill our commission to tend His lambs, and in due season the great Shepherd will reward us with the crown of rejoicing for the glory of the Lord. Amen.