

Michael Apostol: Down, But not Out (1/6/19)

Introduction:

"The is Google hime (But I don't know Jesus)."

"A serious historical case can be made that Jesus never lived at all, as has been made by professor G.A. Wells of London University." Richard Dawkins

Dr John Dickson once said that he would eat a page of his Bible if someone could prove to Him that Jesus did not exist. Luckily for him, his Bible is still in tact.

"In the library of Macquarie University, home to the largest ancient history department in the country, there are probably as many tomes devoted to the historical Jesus as there are to Alexander and Caesar combined." Dr John Dickson

Down, But not Out:

Manny Pacquino, a famous Filipino boxer, went from nothing to something because he never gave up. He was born into a poor family who, at times, didn't even know where their most basic needs would come from. His father, Rosalio, would clamber up as many as 70 trees a day to gather coconuts, struggling to earn enough to feed his family. A family member described them this way "The family lived on bananas and root crops. They had no rice most of the time. Manny wore ragged clothes." At age 10, he moved out to live with his Uncle. At 12, Manny dropped out of school. He pursued a career as a boxer, and by age 16 was winning awards.

Throughout his successful career, Manny (a Christian) trusted God to help over the next obstacle, and the next one, and the next one. He attributes his success to the fact that he never gave up because his God never gave up on him.

King David:

In the book of Second Samuel, the King David has just come back from military success. We pick up the story in chapter 11.

2 Samuel 11:1,2 - After winning a battle, David, the fearless King, decides not to battle with his men. Instead, in his complacency, he wanders out onto the balcony to relax. The thing that David didn't seem to realise, however, was that he was in more danger on his balcony than he was at battle!

We too, can often become complacent when we place our trust in all of our knowledge and understanding. But we are in more danger in our familiarity than we are when we are aware of our lack.

2 Samuel 12 - Fast-forwarding in the story, one year has passed after David committed the sin that we are so familiar with. For that year, David was living in a troubled state of guilt. So, at this time, God sends Nathan the prophet to bring David to repentance.

Mental/psychological illness is rampant today. Like David, guilt, shame and brokenness haunt many. We LONG for forgiveness! How did God use Nathan the prophet to bring this forgiveness to David?

2 Samuel 12:1 - Nathan brought the truth to David in a way that was specially calculated - not to offend - but to bring repentance!

Many times, we too, could take a leaf out of Nathan's book in the way that we present God's message. Yes, our message will often be a hard one to give, but we can choose to share that message in a way that bring people to repentance, rather than simply offending them and turning them away from the God who has the remedy.

2 Samuel 12:7 - "You are the man!" Nathan said. That would have been very hard to tell the beloved King. Nathan, no doubt, would have had tears in his eyes when he shared these words with the King.

This is exactly how we ought to be when we share God's message! God's heart breaks for us when He reveals our sin to us. Ours should break too when we come with a message from the Lord.

God's forgiveness for David's sin was complete! But while his forgiveness is complete, David was not free from the ripple effects of that sin.

Covered up? Or covered?

Psalm 32:1 - In Psalm 32, David shares the joy that comes as a result of forgiveness. "We are happy when our sin is covered!" he says.

There are two possible responses to sin:

1. To cover up our sin.
2. To have our sin covered.

From the one, peace results. From the other, there is drawn out psychological suffering.

Psalm 32:2,3 - In verses two and three of the same chapter David describes in poetic language that sin brings tremendous suffering - both to the sinner and the one that is sinned against.

Psalm 32:5 - But, in verse five, he again reminds us that there is hope. When acknowledgement and confession are made, David says (from personal experience), forgiveness is extended.

1 John 1:9 - This is reiterated in the robust promises of the New Testament. This one, for example, reminds us that God is FAITHFUL to forgive us our sin AND to bring about a healing cleanse.

Illustration: Have you ever heard of the man who was constantly trying to clean the church of the cobwebs? At board meetings and prayer meetings he would be constantly asking and praying for help to clean the cobwebs out of the church. Till one day, a brave lady at the prayer meeting suggested that they stop directing all their attention to the cobwebs and seek to kill the spider!

The same is true of our lives. We are often found dealing only with the cobwebs in our lives, rather than seeking to destroy the root of those external problems.

Psalm 51:

Psalm 51 is the poetic record of David's thought process after that encounter with Nathan the Prophet. In this record we see some of the clearest verses about the response of the repentant heart to the beckoning call of God.

Psalm 51:1 - David could see that God is faithful. As He has promised, "He will never leave us, or forsake us."

There are only two options, David decides. God can either blot out our sins, or He can blot our names out of the book of life.

Psalm 51:2 - So, with that in mind, he chose to ask God to wash and cleanse him. This mighty man of war was broken before God. He recognised that his only hope was in the forgiveness and cleansing of God.

Psalm 51:4 - Unfortunately for David, the consequences of his sin effected those around him. For this he was sorrowful, but in this verse he identifies the real problem - ultimately our sin is against God!

Often we are so concerned about what people will think of us that we overlook the more important offence - that of hurting God!

God's rebuke to David was 'clear,' he says, but 'justified.' So too, we must be honest with ourselves and call sin by its right name. There is not point in pretending about it. But in doing so, we must follow God's example and do so with mercy!

Galatians 6:1 - In the New Testament Paul counsels us that honesty and transparency before God is essential to revival and reformation in the life. We have to stop avoiding the facts and own our brokenness. But in so doing with others, we should be kind and courteous.

John 15:11 - According to Jesus Himself, fullness of joy is what is available to us when we accept God's forgiveness! So why not?!

There are many people who are looking to see the work of God in our real lives. It is more powerful than any sermon we could give!

Conclusion:

From the story of David we can learn many other lessons. As we said earlier, the effects of our sins will often follow us throughout our lives - even after forgiveness is bestowed. But, we can see from this story that if a situation is not resolved immediately, it will eventually be brought to an ultimate restoration - we just have to remain patient with God.

Although David was restored to joy through forgiveness, the consequences of his actions remained. Like Manny Pacquino, though David was cut down through his sins, he was not cut off!! The God that we serve is merciful and long-suffering. He is well about to cleanse and restore us. He is able to give us complete and total joy!

To use the words of a wonderful song, *"It is no secret what God can do. What He's done for others (David), He'll do for you!"*

You may be down (because of your sin), but you are NOT out!! Give it to God - He will forgive you. He will restore you!!