**LIGHTS IN A DARK WORLD (#4)**

***Finding, and Imitating, a Godly Example***

*“that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”* - Phil. 2:15

In this dark world of sin and sorrow we all desperately need a few shining lights in our life to show us the way out of this maze. We need godly examples.

I Corinthians 10:12 states, “*Let him who thinks he stands, take heed, lest you fall*.” We all easily relate to that warning, for we have all sinned and fallen short (Rom. 3:23). But what we then need to hear is the verse right behind it (vs. 13):

*“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

That is more than a platitude, it is a promise! The Lord knows every device in Satan’s schemes to tempt us (2 Cor. 2:11). His all-seeing eye knows every move the serpent makes, and knows every hiding place where the lion stalks his prey (I Pet. 5:8).

The Bible is filled to overflowing with example after example of faithful heroes of faith who went to battle with the devil and defeated him. The number is legion who came face to face with lions, fiery furnaces, hangman’s gallows, stoning pits, and prison dungeons who lived to tell about it.

Hebrews 11:32-34 describes others, some of whom are named but many of whom remain anonymous to us, but not to God.

“*And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.”*

In the above text these examples of faith survived the test, living to fight another day. God spared their lives and showed us that He was with them through the refining fire.
Daniel vs. lions? Escaped. Jeremiah vs. dungeon? Escaped. David vs. giant? Escaped.
Hananiah vs. fiery furnace? Escaped. Mordecai vs. gallows? Escaped.

But it does not always turn into a “happily ever after” story, at least as far as this world is concerned. Sometimes the hero dies. Just read the next verses in Hebrews 11:35-39.

*Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*

We call them martyrs. The word martyr originally meant a witness. By New Testament times it came to mean one who died for their witness. We think of Stephen as the first martyr who was stoned for preaching Christ (Acts 7). The book of Revelation is a testament from Jesus that vindicates the blood of the martyrs. The fifth seal, when opened, reads like this in Revelation 6:9-11,

*9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

Martyrdom, as cruel as it sounds, is rewarded with “*white robes*” and “*rest*,” along with the Lord’s promise that those they left behind will take courage by their faith and follow them to God’s altar through martyrdom. Their godly example will save both themselves and others who imitate them being “*faithful unto death*” (Rev. 2:10).

The power of godly examples cannot be overstated. Young people, you need to find a mentor to imitate, whether in the flesh, or in the scriptures. There are older Christian men and women who have been to war with Satan and, while wounded and scarred, have survived and remain faithful to their confession. They stand ready to mentor you (read Titus 2:1-8). The life of elders (also called shepherds) are placed by God in the church to be followed as examples: “*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being* ***examples*** *to the flock”* (I Pet. 5:2-3). Do you realize there is a command from God that reads like this:

*“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct”* (Heb. 13:7). These men, and their wives (I Tim. 3:11), are godly examples for you to follow.

Likewise, deacons and their wives *“obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (I Tim. 3:13). Get to know them and imitate their “great boldness in the faith.”

Young Christians, God has purposefully designed that the church be a fellowship of believers who desperately need one another. You cannot be “an army of one” and defeat Satan. Finding godly examples and imitating them will create a synergy that will sustain you through the these days of spiritual warfare. Please, for your soul’s sake, find someone who is willing to say, “*Imitate me as I imitate Christ*” (I Cor. 11:1).

Godly examples are your lights in a dark world.

Walk with them. – Rick