

The University Heights Messenger

August 1, 2010

The Cost Of Influence And Reputation

By Bill Hall

There are people in this world who are possessed with natural ability to lead and command the respect of others. Call it charm, charisma, magnetism, or whatever, such people wield a powerful influence on those who look up to them as the embodiment of all they would like to become themselves.

Peter apparently possessed such qualities among the apostles; and there were David, Deborah, Nehemiah, and others. We have known such people in our day and been influenced by them. Each reader can probably think of some “hero” of faith that he or she has looked up to through the years.

The opportunity for good that such people possess is tremendous; **but so are the responsibilities.** It is true that sin is sin, whoever commits it; that sin will separate one from God just as quickly as it will another. But the adverse consequences of one’s sins increase dramatically with the increase of the influence and reputation he enjoys among others. The confidence of others is a trust that must be carefully protected. Once that trust is in place, the person to whom it is committed has responsibilities that others of more normal influence and reputation do not have; and the more people involved in the trust, the greater the responsibility.

Those of reputation must be prepared for greater public scandal when they sin. Nathan told David that because of his adultery he had “**given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme**” (2 Samuel 12:14). Others had committed adultery in Israel, and their adultery had gone unnoticed by the enemies of God. But

this was David! It was inevitable that the sin of this one man of influence and reputation would result in greater scandal than the sins of the multitude of people of lesser influence and reputation.

Those of reputation must be prepared for sterner rebuke when they sin than those of lesser reputation. Paul speaks of withstanding Peter “to his face” when Peter withdrew from eating with the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-14). Paul’s rebuke of Peter was “before them all.” Peter was hardly the first Jewish Christian to refuse to eat with Gentile Christians, but Paul obviously recognized the seriousness of Peter’s actions because of his great reputation and influence. Others were following his lead on this occasion, including Barnabas. Peter could not enjoy the luxury of a private meeting with Paul; Peter had to face the sting of immediate and open rebuke. Peter had betrayed a trust. Nothing less than open rebuke could counteract the harm that was resulting. Sterner rebuke is simply a cost--an inevitable cost--of influence and reputation.

Those of reputation must live more cautiously than others if they would maintain their influence and good name. Every Christian is warned not to place a stumbling block in his brother’s way (Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 8:9), but one who is known and admired by thousands of brethren in many places obviously will have to be more cautious than the one who is known and admired by only a few brethren locally. Paul would have to give up far more to be “all things to all men” than would some Christian who had never been outside his home community. That’s just the cost of influence and reputation. If one is not willing to pay the cost--if he is determined

to be unbending in his conduct “no matter what others think”--he needs to have greater appreciation of the value of a good name (Proverbs 22:1).

Those of reputation must be especially careful to build upon Jesus Christ, the true foundation, rather than upon themselves. The words, “**for we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,**” must become their motto (2 Corinthians 4:5). Those who place their loyalty in men of name and reputation are in error. Their faith is not what it ought to be. But those who deliberately use charisma and flattery to attract a following are also in error (1 Thessalonians 2:1-13). The more natural charisma one is blessed (?) with, the more cautious he must be.

When “Shoeless” Joe Jackson, a star Chicago White Sox outfielder, was involved in the “Blackstocking” scandal of the 1920’s and was on his way to trial, a small boy, hurt, disappointed, with tears in his eyes, was heard to cry, “Say it ain’t so, Joe, say it ain’t so!” Each reader is likely somebody’s hero. Other readers are men and women of widespread influence. Let each one, when he is tempted, **and before he yields**, look ahead to the tears, and hurt disillusionment that he is about to bring to those who look up to him; let him hear their potential cries of “Say it ain’t so, Joe”; and, motivated by their confidence and his own love for the Lord, let him “resist the devil.” For, if he betrays the trust that has been committed to him, he can be saved eternally through repentance and forgiveness, but he will likely never recover the trust he has lost. Right or wrong, that’s reality. It is the inevitable cost of influence and reputation.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

The sick list will be receiving a change in format. After the individual has been listed for a week or so, if there is no new update on their condition, I will be moving them to the list at the bottom. That list will be broken up into two groups: members of this congregation and all others. Any new updates on their health will be posted above that list as always.

Ruel Baker and **Wes Kidd** were both released from the hospital this past week.

Our members: **Glen Davis, Glenn Kimberlin**

Others: **Robert and Sarah Brundige, Vera Howerton, Gail Stein, Glenn Goldy, Shannon Gilbert, Harley Miller, Chuck McDavitt, the Shamas family.**

Reminders

Check the bulletin board for meeting announcements.

Make use of the box in the back for sermon, bulletin, or prayer requests.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Brent Hunter is visiting today and will be presenting God’s Word to us both this morning and evening.

The singing service will be held this Friday. It’s always a very encouraging hour so please make your plans to attend.

BIBLE READING SCHEDULE FOR 8/1-8/7:

Sunday:1 Chron 1, Ps 150, Rev 20-22

Monday:1 Chron 2, Ps 1, Matt 1-2

Tuesday:1 Chron 3-4, Ps 2, Matt 3-4

Wednesday:1 Chron 5, Ps 3, Matt 5

Thursday:1 Chron 6, Ps 4, Matt 6

Friday:1 Chron 7, Ps 5, Matt 7

Saturday:1 Chron 8, Ps 6, Matt 8

SERMON TOPICS:

Sunday AM. If I could live life all over again

Sunday PM. Discipline: The crowning fruit of the spirit