

The Grapevine

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Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth. II Timothy 2:15

Credibility Issues

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Looking at numerous records in the Old and the New Testament, we see individuals who put their lives on the line for the true God. For some, it was a one-time recorded event. For others, it was the way they lived their entire lives. In many of these records, we see one element that keeps popping up and that is the attacks on the believer's credibility.

Satan is the god of this world, (II Corinthians 4:3-4). One of his methods of stealing, killing and destroying is to falsely accuse God's people. Paul explained to Timothy that this sort of ungodly activity would happen.

II Timothy 3:2-3

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good.

This record was written nearly 2000 years ago, yet it is as relevant and worthy of our attention today as it was back then. These things happened in that day and time, and still are happening today. Believers will encounter these types of people in their life, resulting in their credibility and integrity being challenged. The temptation to just quit will be strong. Our response should be to look to God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

The accusers of God's people will be slanderous, treacherous and sometimes fierce. It doesn't matter, because we look unto Jesus, who endured the cross, despised the shame, but is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Most people want to have a good name. They want to be looked upon as a believable person and someone that can be trusted. As a child of God, we especially want to be thought of as a good, decent individual. We also would like those that we associate with to have credibility and integrity.

Yet, there may be times when we, or those we fellowship with, are caught in one of Satan's traps, and credibility is challenged, and sometimes destroyed.

Philippians 3:13-14

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul was subject to similar accusations. Before his conversion to Christianity, he had a "spotted" past of brutality that he had to live with after he was born again. By God's grace and mercy he managed to put it behind him and press toward the high calling of God. However, some of his biggest challenges came years later as he confronted the unbelief of those that had previously stood with him on God's Word.

Paul had been arrested and put into prison. That would challenge anyone's credibility to onlookers. But God was with him and inspired him to write specific charges to one of the faithful believers; Timothy.

I Timothy 1:3-4

**As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,
Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.**

Timothy was Paul's trusted friend. Timothy stood with him and was still standing with him when Paul wrote to him. In spite of Timothy's efforts, however, the apostle Paul's credibility issue, among other things, was far too much for many in the Church.

II Timothy 1:15

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

From the surface, there may have been a personality issue between the apostle Paul and the believers of the first century church. This was not the case. When these believers turned away from Paul, they were turning their backs on God, His Word, and the Lord Jesus Christ. To an outsider, these people would have looked completely justified in their actions. The world would have probably applauded their "good decision" to get away from him. Unfortunately, it was the downfall of the early Church.

Our responsibility to the other members in the Body of Christ includes believing and obeying what is written to us when there are problems.

Colossians 3:12-14

**Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.**

There will be no credibility issues when we forbear, forgive and put on the love of God. There are no excuses for doing otherwise.

Galatians 6:1, 10

**Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.
As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.**

We are to restore and reinstate a fellow believer, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, considering yourself in case you ever get entrapped. We are to be mindful to be a blessing to others, especially those of the household of faith.

I Peter 4:8

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Love restores all credibility.

I John 4:20-21

**If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?
And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.**