

CONCERNED ABOUT HIS REPUTATION

TEXT: (Ezekiel 36:17-21, TLB)

¹⁷ “Son of dust, when the people of Israel were living in their own country, they defiled it by their evil deeds; to me their worship was as foul as filthy rags. ¹⁸ They polluted the land with murder and with the worshiping of idols, so I poured out my fury upon them. ¹⁹ And I exiled them to many lands; that is how I punished them for the evil way they lived. ²⁰ But when they were scattered out among the nations, then they were a blight upon my holy name because the nations said, ‘These are the people of God and he couldn’t protect them from harm!’ ²¹ I am concerned about my reputation that was ruined by my people throughout the world.

INTRODUCTION

A. Reputation

1. “Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt’” (Exodus 32:7-8, NIV).
2. “‘I have seen these people,’ the LORD said to Moses, ‘and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation’”
3. “But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. ‘LORD,’ he said, ‘why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, “‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’”? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: “‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.’” ” Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened” (Exodus 32:11-14, NIV).

I. WHAT IS SIN?

A. Violation of God’s Command

1. “‘You will not surely die,’ the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Genesis 3:4-5, NIV).

B. Rejection of God

1. “And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king” (1 Samuel 8:7, NIV).

C. Sin Is Always a Lie; It Will Never Produce What It Claims

1. “The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord” (Joshua 9:14, NIV).

II. YOUR REPUTATION IS HIS REPUTATION

1. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52, NIV).

A. How Do Others See You?

1. "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:5-6, NIV).
2. "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody" (I Thessalonians 4:11-12, NIV).

B. How Do Others See Christ in Your Family?

1. "Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (I Timothy 2 :8-10, NIV).
2. "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place" (Revelation 2:4-5, NIV).
3. "I am concerned about my reputation that was ruined by my people throughout the world" (Ezekiel 36:21, TLB).
4. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.
"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are" (Matthew 23:13, 15, NIV).

C. Jesus Has a Good Name

1. "I am concerned about my reputation that was ruined by my people throughout the world" (Ezekiel 36:21, TLB).
2. "A good name is more desirable than great riches" (Proverbs 22:1, NIV).
3. "By great riches we may relieve the bodily wants of others, but by a good name we may recommend religion to them" (Matthew Henry, Vol. 3. p. 916).
4. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (II Corinthians 5:20, NIV).
5. "A good name is better than fine perfume" (Ecclesiastes 7:1, NIV).

III. AN EROSION OF THE FEAR OF GOD—FROM CARNALITY TO APOSTASY

1. "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30, NIV).

2. "For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord" (Jude 4, NIV).

A. Despise Government and Authority

1. "In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings" (Jude 8, NIV).
2. "This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings" (II Peter 2:10, NIV).
3. "These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage" (Jude 16, NIV).

B. Arrogance Is a Characteristic of the Apostate

1. "For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry" (I Samuel 15:23, NIV).
2. "But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish" (II Peter 2:12, NIV).
3. "Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them" (Jude 10, NIV).
4. "For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:13-15, NIV).

C. A Failure to Love Truth

1. "Buy the truth and do not sell it" (Proverbs 23:23, NIV).
2. "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (II Thessalonians 2:10-12, NIV).

CONCLUSION

1. "But when they were scattered out among the nations, then they were a blight upon my holy name because the nations said, 'These are the people of God and he couldn't protect them from harm!'" (Ezekiel 36:20, TLB)
2. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16, KJV).
3. "But you reply, 'No, that's not the road we want!'" (Jeremiah 6:16, NLT).