

Study 0098

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE MARKETPLACE (8)

In our last study, we were challenged to live righteously and live only for God in the marketplace, so that unbelievers will come to the knowledge of the salvation and worship of the one true God. We noted that we should live in a manner that glorifies God, and that projects the true nature of God to the people of the world, if haply they may be convicted and convinced into coming to the salvation and worship of God. Thus, in the marketplace, we are to order our “*conversation honest among the Gentiles ...*” (1 Timothy 3:7) so that when the people of the world speak against us as evildoers, they may by our good works, which they shall behold, glorify God (1 Peter 2:12). This was how God wanted Old Testament Israel to represent Him to the world, and it was John the Baptist’s charge to the people of his day who came to his baptism (Luke 3:7-14). In studying the experience of Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and, Abednego, in Babylon and among the Babylonians (Daniel 1:1-20; 2:1-49; 3:1-30; 4:1-37), and, Daniel’s experience in the Medo-Persian kingdom (Daniel 6:1-28), we saw the similarity with how we, today’s Christians, should conduct ourselves in the world.

Using Daniel and his colleagues’ experiences in Babylon and Persia, we can summarize how we, as Christians in the marketplace, should live, as follows:

1. We should purpose in our hearts not to be defiled by the world, and we should act accordingly when the occasion demands, so that we can cause God’s favour to manifest on our account (Daniel 1:3-16).
2. When we make God and His word, the object and subject respectively, of our uppermost concern, He will make us the head and not the tail, in relation to the people of the world (Daniel 1:17-20; Deuteronomy 28:1ff); and the evidence of our being God’s own special treasure, will be clear to all, including the very high in society.
3. When we encounter challenges in the marketplace (and there will be very many challenges), we must make it a habit to take such challenges to God in prayers for His solution, because challenges in the marketplace as it concerns you, is for your upliftment, and for the glory of God, not for your destruction (Daniel 2:1ff; Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-8; 1 Corinthians 10:13)!
4. If we are to survive the marketplace, we must know our God intimately, and trust Him absolutely (Daniel 11:32; Philippians 3:7-11; Proverbs 3:5-6)!
5. Our conduct in the marketplace must always be for the glory of God in all things and this will be evident when the people of the world come to confess and glorify our God as the only true God (Daniel 2:46-47)!
6. The Christian in the marketplace will certainly be tempted to worship other gods (Mammon, career, promotion, social status, political appointment, etc.), and may even be compelled to do so at the pain of death, if he refuses; but he must stand his grounds, and God will prove Himself on his account (Daniel 3:1ff; James 1:12-16; Isaiah 43:1-2); and even if God does not deliver the Christian, it is still for His glory, and He will be glorified (Romans 14:7-9).
7. When the true miracles of God are demonstrated on account of God’s children, the world cannot but glorify God, and promote the Christian in the process (Matthew 5:14-16)!
8. When we are being sought for counsel by unbelievers, we should ensure that we declare the full and undiluted counsel of God, without embellishments; for when it is fulfilled, the unbeliever will be turned into a true worshipper of God (Daniel 4:1ff)!
9. Our testimony in the marketplace must be impeccable, not only to believers in Christ, but also among the unbelievers (Daniel 6:3-5; John 14:30).

10. When we are entrapped by human decrees because of our worship of God, and our obedience to His word, we should not be afraid, rather, we should commit everything into God's hands, and he will certainly deliver us (**Daniel 6:10-22; Psalm 34:19-20**)!
11. The Christian's deliverance will be the testimony that will bring unbelievers to the presence of God for salvation and worship (**Daniel 6:25-27**)!

Scripture Texts: Ezekiel 14:12-21; Daniel 5:1-14

From the first scripture text above, we find that Daniel was considered a righteous man by God, just as Noah and Job. Daniel's righteousness was not just the righteousness of grace, but also of works. Indeed, the righteousness of faith is dead without works (**James 2:14-25**). Another factor which helped Daniel in the heathen land was the 'excellent spirit' in him (**Daniel 6:3**). Thus, we note that Daniel and his friends in Babylon were able to act in a manner that glorified God in a godless, heathen society, because of their righteousness in God, and the Spirit of God in them. They were God's chosen seed, a holy nation, and His peculiar treasure (**Exodus 19:5-6**), which they proved by their conduct in Babylon (their own marketplace)!

As believers in Christ, we are confronted each day with situations that seek to test or prove our faith in God, and hence, our true righteousness in Him (**Matthew 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:6-9**). In addition, we are faced with major issues of the day: for instance, how do you deal with a situation where a bribe is demanded of you for a service that you really have need of? In clearer terms, should a student who is a Christian be involved in "sorting" so that he can graduate in flying colours? Should a Christian pay a bribe to a Customs Officer so that his goods can be released to him? Some of the situations that we confront are not as simple as it may seem, for there are indeed more complex situations. [*Please discuss as many situations as may be necessary, and also, how a Christian should respond in each instance.*]

How we act in challenging situations in the marketplace is what really determines our true righteousness in God, which brings glory to God. And our righteousness in God is based on our faith in Christ for our salvation (**Romans 3:21-22**). Hence, if we are indeed to conduct ourselves in a manner that will truly glorify God, we would do well to look unto, and imitate, our Lord Jesus Christ in all things, because He truly glorified His Father in all things (**John 17:4; Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 5:1-2; Matthew 11:29; Ephesians 4:17-24; John 8:4-6a; Matthew 4:1-11**). And if we are to be able to imitate Christ, and not just try to be copycats in our own strength, we would need to have the same Spirit which Jesus had while He was here on earth, and which Daniel had and manifested in a heathen land (**Acts 10:38; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:15-18**). And if the Spirit of Christ is in us, then ours is to yield to His (the Holy Spirit's) leading (**Galatians 5:16-23**), and we would be able to live as God desires of us in the marketplace!