

Sermon Series: “*Strengthening Your Grip*”—Lord of Life Lutheran Church—Westfield, IN—6/9/2002

Title: “*Strengthening your grip on integrity*” Text: Psalm 75: 5-7 & 78: 70-72

Introduction: *Ills.: Integrity in word and action*

Theme: Believers in Christ don’t aspire to integrity as if it is a personal badge of honor; rather because of their newly resurrected life in Christ, they live a life of integrity in reflection of the Jesus is at the center of their heart.

The testing of our integrity

- Integrity will be tested by the natural course of events in our lives
 1. ***By trials***
 1. **Ills.: Okl. City bombing—the character of Americans under duress was one thing blast not able to destroy**
 2. The integrity of our trust in God’s promise and provision in helpless and hopeless times is what is proven
 3. “*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Romans 8:38-39
 2. ***By prosperity***
 1. Our character is tested and proven more by how we handle the praise and acclaim of others
 2. **PRINT AND READ PSALM 75: 6-7**
 3. Keeping the right perspective about our life—we are God-made/not self-made—it is his honor that matters
- Integrity will be tested by God
 3. We become offended at others and at God when our integrity is called into question —but why?—is it a pride issue
 1. God warns against “tooting our own horn” (**PRINT AND READ PSALM 75: 5**)
 - **Ills.: Watch out in our quest for integrity**
 2. We should desire to be accountable to God and to others to hone our walk so that it matches our talk
 - “*You have probed my heart. You have confronted me at night, You have tested me like silver, but you found nothing wrong. I have determined that my mouth will not sin.*” Psalm 17: 3
 4. God tests our integrity to get rid of the impurity in motives, attitudes, actions so my life is a witness of praise to Jesus
 1. “*He will act like a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify Levi's sons and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will bring acceptable offerings to the Lord.*” Malachi 3:3

The heart of integrity (Print and read Psalm 78: 70-72)(David = man after God’s own heart)

- ***Humbleness*** of perspective
 1. David always remembered from whence he came — the sheep pen to the throne room
 1. Not a glorious task — integrity in Christ is shown in our lives when we do with commitment the least task
 2. God used it to prepare him for his “*future shepherding*” (***shepherded them accord. to the integrity of his heart***)
 2. Integrity is not defined by telling others what you have done; rather living out what Jesus is accomplishing in you
 1. “*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* Phil. 1: 6
- ***Employed*** in the Lord’s work
 1. David is referred to as a “servant” (focus on the work and stewardship God had given to him)
 2. Do you and I see ourselves as employed in the Lord’s service — not owners but managers of “his possession”
 3. Integrity is lived out when I understand that I am accountable to a higher authority

4. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” 2 Cor. 5: 10*

- **Available** to be used in the Lord’s plan
 1. God’s elected, sovereign plan for David was to make him king via the sheep pen, the battle field, and being a fugitive
 2. The heart of integrity is trusting God’s plan for me in Christ enough to follow even when I don’t see where its leading
- **Repentant** in attitude, action, and word
 3. **Ills.: True Repentance**
 4. David was not a perfect person—so integrity is not some artificial holiness but willingness to confess & turn
- **Teachable** in being stretched by God to new horizons
 5. **Ills.: Quick Learner**
 6. David was moldable – (integrity = discernment/teachable)--able to learn from life experiences and apply to later on
 7. Integrity is understanding God’s higher calling for me in Christ— adapting to God’s development plan for me

Integrity in word and action

A busload of politicians were driving down a country road when, all of a sudden, the bus ran off the road & crashed into a tree in an old farmer’s field. The old farmer, after seeing what happened, went over to investigate. He then proceeded to dig a hole & bury the politicians. A few days later, the local sheriff came out, saw the crashed bus & asked the old farmer where all the politicians had gone. The old farmer said he had buried them. The sheriff asked the old farmer, "The coroner wasn’t here. Are you sure they were all dead?" The old farmer replied, "Well, some of them said they weren’t, but you know how them politicians lie."

Watch out in our quest for integrity

One of the powerful figures in Wall Street fell in love with an actress. For many months he was always seen escorting her about in the fashionable circles of town. Deciding to marry her, he first put a private detective to the job of looking into her former dealings and friends in order to guard himself against any rash mistake. At last he received his agent’s report. “Miss Blank enjoys an excellent reputation. Her past is spotless. Her associates have been above reproach. The only breath of scandal is that, in recent months, she has been much seen in the company of a business man of doubtful reputation.”

True Repentance

Several years ago the Peanuts comic strip had Lucy and Charlie Brown practicing football. Lucy would hold the ball for Charlie’s place-kicking and then Charlie would kick the ball. But every time Lucy had ever held the ball for Charlie, he would approach the ball and kick with all his might. At the precise moment of the point of no return, Lucy would pick up the ball and Charlie would kick and his momentum unchecked by the ball, which was not there to kick, would cause him to fall flat on his back. This strip opened with Lucy holding the ball, but Charlie Brown would not kick the ball. Lucy begged him to kick the ball. But Charlie Brown said, "Every time I try to kick the ball you remove it and I fall on my back." They went back and forth for the longest time and finally Lucy broke down in tears and admitted, "Charlie Brown I have been so terrible to you over the years, picking up the football like I have. I have played so many cruel tricks on you, but I’ve seen the error of my ways! I’ve seen the hurt look in your eyes when I’ve deceived you. I’ve been wrong, so wrong. Won’t you give a poor penitent girl another chance?" Charlie Brown was moved by her display of grief and responded to her, "Of course, I’ll give you another chance." He stepped back as she held the ball, and he ran. At the last moment, Lucy picked up the ball and Charlie Brown fell flat on his back. Lucy’s last words were, "Recognizing your faults and actually changing your ways are two different things, Charlie Brown!" Are you going to change your ways as of today?

A Quick Learner

Farmer Joe decided his injuries from the accident were serious enough to take the trucking company (responsible for the accident) to court. In court, the trucking company's fancy lawyer was questioning farmer Joe. "Didn't you say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'?", questioned the lawyer. Farmer Joe responded, "Well I'll tell you what happened. I had just loaded my favorite mule Bessie into the..." "I didn't ask for any details," the lawyer interrupted, "just answer the question. Did you not say, at the scene of the accident, 'I'm fine'!" Farmer Joe said, "Well I had just got Bessie into the trailer and I was driving down the road..." The lawyer interrupted again and said, "Judge, I am trying to establish the fact that, at the scene of the accident, this man told the Highway Patrolman on the scene that he was just fine. Now several weeks after the accident he is trying to sue my client. I believe he is a fraud. Please tell him to simply answer the question." By this time the Judge was fairly interested in Farmer Joe's answer and said to the lawyer, "I'd like to hear what he has to say about his favorite mule Bessie." Joe thanked the Judge and proceeded, "Well as I was saying, I had just loaded Bessie, my favorite mule, into the trailer and was driving her down the highway when this huge semi-truck and trailer ran the stop sign and smacked my truck right in the side. I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie was thrown into the other. I was hurting real bad and didn't want to move. However, I could hear ole Bessie moaning and groaning. I knew she was in terrible shape just by her groans. Shortly after the accident a Highway Patrolman came on the scene. He could hear Bessie moaning and groaning so he went over to her. After he looked at her he took out his gun and shot her between the eyes. Then the Patrolman came across the road with his gun in his hand and looked at me. He said, "Your mule was in such bad shape I had to shoot her. How are you feeling?" It was then that I said, "I'm fine."

Psalm 75:5-7

⁵Do not lift up your horn on high,
Do not speak with insolent pride.' "

⁶For not from the east, nor from the west,
Nor from the desert *comes* exaltation;

⁷But God is the Judge;
He puts down one, and exalts another. [NASB]

Psalm 78:70-72

He also chose David His servant,

And took him from the sheepfolds;

⁷¹From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him,
To shepherd Jacob His people,

And Israel His inheritance. (*the people who belonged to the Lord*)

⁷²So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart,
And guided them with his skillful hands.[NASB]